

in the news: environment

State program focuses on conserving water, energy

GREEN LODGING / From 3

Chamber of Commerce executive director Daniel Samess said he is pleased to be part of the effort to create more green lodging in the Keys.

"We can bring in a different kind of market with (green lodging)," Samess said. "Customers are demanding it. The hard part is change — getting people to take the leap. It's scary. But in business, you change or you die."

To help facilitate that change, the chamber is partnering with the FDEP and GLEE to bring Comer and her green lodging workshop to Marathon in early August. The date, time, and location will be announced soon, but the Marathon session will likely take place around the same time as another green lodging workshop Comer is hosting in Key Largo on Aug. 8.

It was just such a workshop, held earlier this year in Key West and sponsored by the Lodging Association of Key West and the

Program grows in Keys

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Certified Green Lodging Program reports that, in addition to the Banyan Resort, four other Keys accommodations have applied for green certification. All are located in Key West. They are:

- ◆ The Gardens Hotel
- ◆ Old Town Manor
- ◆ Rose Lane Villas
- ◆ Andrews Inn and Garden Cottages

Florida Keys, which caught the Banyan Resort management's attention and compelled them to apply for green lodging certification.

Julie Brown, assistant general manager at the Banyan, said her resort had already taken steps toward a cleaner, greener property before linking with FDEP. But she credits the state agency with helping the Banyan reach an even more ambitious set of environmental goals.

"Everybody knows the basics, and we were already recycling and using solar panels. We were xeriscaping with native plants, and we installed low flow

Learn more

To learn more about the Certified Green Lodging Program, visit www.florida-greenlodging.org or call Laura Comer, south district green lodging coordinator, at (239) 332-6975, Ext. 170.

toilets, faucets, and showerheads," Brown said.

"But (FDEP) provides so much education and guidance for us to do even more. I can't stress enough the value of the

education and information they give. And once we are certified, we get vendor discounts and marketing help, too."

Brown said she particularly appreciates a spreadsheet tool provided by FDEP for tracking and reporting water and power usage. Green lodges must provide annual data to the state in order to maintain — or advance — their certification as a green lodge.

To launch the certification process, Comer said lodging facilities must secure the commitment of top management and/or owners; fill out an application; create a "green team" consisting of key staff members; and conduct a self-assessment using a checklist provided by FDEP.

Once the green team believes their resort has satisfied the program requirements, FDEP schedules a site visit and an assessor inspects the property to ensure that it meets green lodging standards.

Brown called the application process "time consuming, but not terrible," and said credit goes to Banyan's green team for making the project manageable.

"(The green team members) are the eyes and ears in all the different areas of the resort," Brown said. "It wouldn't work unless everybody chipped in.

We're all so proud that we're going to be a green lodge. It's an impressive certification."

Cristina Lindley, executive director of GLEE and public outreach coordinator for FDEP's Office of Greenways and Trails, said she is being trained to conduct site visits and facilitate green lodging certifications for the department. She toured the Banyan Resort during its site visit and agreed that the staff there should be proud of what they have accomplished.

"They've done a tremendous job," Lindley said. "Their rooms are so varied but every one has something green about it. It's a very good beginning."

Lindley said she believes green lodging is vital to the Key's sustainability — financially and environmentally.

"It's worth the initial investment and effort to go green," Lindley said. "Being green means saving money in the long run, and it will make our islands a lovelier place. That will attract the ecotourist, and we really should be doing more to promote eco-tourism here."

"The world is watching what we're doing," Lindley said. "I get shivers just thinking about it. Ecotourism will save the Keys. We can do this."

MORE CHOICE

Standard with every auto policy.

It's good to have choices.

Because without them, how can you ever make an informed comparison?

Frankly, you can't. Which is one more reason why you should purchase auto insurance from an independent agency. We represent several insurance companies, so we're free to recommend the coverage that's better for you. Equally important, we take the time to show you why.

The moral of this story? "A choice of one is no choice at all." So choose a better way!

Call our agency at 305-852-3234 or 305-743-3414 for a free auto quote.



90144 Overseas Highway
Tavernier, FL 33070
www.reganinsuranceinc.com



business capsules

Waterfront master plan

The city of Key West is in the process of developing a Port Master Plan, and would like users of the waterfront to help by filling out questionnaires.

The master plan will provide guiding policies and criteria for the city's waterfront, writes Raymond Archer, port director.

The questionnaires are available on the city's Web site, keywestcity.com (under Port Operations/Port Advisory Board/Additional Information) or from the Port Operations Office at #3 East Quay Road, Key West.

All questionnaires are to be mailed to: Port Operations, P.O. Box 6434,

Key West, FL 33041.

Call (305) 809-3790 for more information.

Traveler's check fraud

First State Bank is advising Keys consumers and business owners to be on the alert when accepting or cashing Visa traveler's checks.

Recently in Monroe County, fraudulent checks have been passed, most written in the amount of \$500 and bearing the bank name Banca Serafin, S.R.

To confirm the validity of a traveler's check or to report check fraud, call Ana Ortiz with Citicorp at 1-800-645-6556.