

A number of experts spoke on topics ranging from design and construction, energy use, healthy homes and reducing negative impact to the environment.

Keith Ware of the Washington, D.C.,-based Eco-Green Living LLC gave tips on how to improve air quality, such as buying air filtration systems and using carbon

dioxide detectors, and added common sense measures like opening windows and making your home smoke-free.

### Frank Gallant of Takoma Park

Tunis spoke of the advantages of using rain barrels, open containers placed next to roof gutter spouts to collect precipitation, as a "low-tech method to save water from your roof" and use it for plants and landscaping.

When they were not lecturing on their topics, speakers sold their wares including solar heaters and indigenous plants for gardening. There were also corn-burning stoves for \$2,000, according to Takoma Park-based retailer Save Our Sky.

"I think what people experience at these conferences is that there are expensive, high-tech ways to reduce energy but there are also simple low-tech solutions," said Takoma Park resident Frank Gallant.

After attending the conference, Gallant said he intends to "tighten" his house by looking for places where cold air can seep in, through doorways and electrical sockets, and insulate those places.

"I don't want to lose heat,



J. ADAM FENSTER/THE GAZETTE

Ellen McBarnett of Urban Solar Solutions shows a visitor to the Green Building Conference the basket of conventional light bulbs that would be saved with the purchase of just one compact florescent bulb during the Sunday event at Takoma Park Community Center.

energy and money," he said.

Takoma Park Councilwoman Colleen Clay credited the success of the conference to a focus on "real practical solutions" to home building and renovation.

"The city of Takoma Park as a community is very dedicated to being not only environmentally friendly but active and aggressive in embracing environmental planning," Clay said.

As an example, "For \$400 you can put in a solar power roof," Clay said.

John Spears, president of Sustainable Design Group and president and chief executive officer of

the International Center for Sustainable Development, was the keynote speaker. His suggestions for a more eco-friendly home included using wastewater from sinks and showers to irrigate gardens, using shade and sunlight rather than traditional heaters and air conditioners, and buying products like solar heaters.

On a larger scale, Spears believes that every community can be completely self-sustainable "if we can just open our eyes to see it." He proposed buildings made out of clay, sand and lime, as well as using composting toilets and turning waste into fertilizer and methane gas for cooking.

Spears, a Gaithersburg resident, stressed that not only were these suggestions more environmentally friendly than more regular methods, but also more economical, no matter where the location.

He has worked with communities to provide eco-friendly construction, which include Kimberly, South Africa, Guanghan, China, and Loreto Bay, Mexico.

Closer to home, at the Sandy Spring Friends School in Silver Spring, he added a trademarked "Earth Home," made of compressed indigenously made bricks and including composting toilets, a solar greenhouse, a central skylight, soy foam insulation, and a planted ceiling and walls to provide shade in the summer.

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