

"GOING GREEN" is a hot-button topic for many people. This was amply demonstrated by the responses we received following our July cover story about the various challenges faced by small businesses that want to lessen their environmental impact but still remain viable. We received a host of letters, phone calls and e-mails from Costco members lauding the subject—or decrying it (for some people, seeing green on the cover made them see red). We also heard from many members who wanted to let us know what green steps they're taking in their businesses.

—T. Foster Jones

Green revisited

Package deal

COSTCO MEMBER LES Bohush was so impressed by one of the members profiled in *The Connection* that he contacted him to propose a business deal.

Bohush is the senior vice president of Gibby Media Group (www.gibbymedia.com), located in Spokane, Washington, which manufactures the Gibby Thin Disc, the first flexible and recyclable CD and DVD disc. "Manufacturing our Gibby Disc produces 56 percent less carbon emission and uses 50 percent less polycarbonate," says Bohush, "plus it's 50 percent thinner, 50 percent lighter and has no nonbiodegradable binder resin." The discs work with Windows, Mac and Linux.

After seeing the story about Groovehouse Records (www.groovehouse.com), a Costco member business in Woodland Hills, California, that offers CD and DVD packaging made of 100 percent recycled cardboard and clear disc trays made of 100 percent recycled plastic, Bohush contacted Bryan Kelley of Groovehouse Records to see what they could do together.

"It would be a natural partnership," says Bohush. ☐

Grounds for change

CHAD MCNAIR, PRESIDENT of Aspen Beverage company (www.aspenbeverage.com), has found a new use for the used coffee grounds that his company used to pay to have hauled away to the landfill.

The San Antonio, Texas-based company, which manufactures the coffee base for the Latte Freeze that is served in Costco's food courts, generates a considerable amount of coffee grounds.

"I think there are about 8 million Latte Freeze and Mocha Latte beverages served each year at Costco," says McNair.

Aspen Beverage has now partnered with Costco Business Member, Millberger's Landscaping and Nursery (www.millbergernursery.com), to create an environmentally friendly organic coffee compost at a number of landscaping sites. "The coffee grounds act like a wetting agent and hold moisture real well," says Randy Clayton, operations manager at Millberger's. "It is also very acidic, and that seems to do well in these areas where the soil has high alkalinity."

"Water conservation is a huge issue here in San Antonio, as is reduction of chemical fertilizers, as all of our water comes from an underground aquifer," says McNair. "This is a win for everyone." ☐

Killing them softly

PEST MANAGEMENT IS hardly an area that would evoke thoughts of green, evoking instead images of toxic pesticide fumes and poisons. Yet Hearts Pest Management (www.heartspm.com), a pest control company based in Southern California, has created a sizable organic customer base. "We are the first and only company south of San Francisco with an organic- and IPM- [integrated pest management] based certification," says HPM president and Costco member Gerry Weitz.

The goal of IPM is to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides by creating an organic pest control service and looking at ways to use non-chemical methods to kill pests.

"For instance," says Weitz, "as an alternative to the organic products we use, an IPM inspector may suggest that a customer modify their landscape or alter sanitation methods. Quick and easy solutions may be to move trash cans out of a garage, or to relocate a pest-infested flower pot. Other examples include vine placement and irrigation schedules that can reduce pest infestation. We can also manage the timing and placement of beneficial insects in gardens, orchards and fruit trees to biologically manage pests without pesticides." ☐



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Living eco-centric

WHEN ECOCENTRE, the Living Building, opened in Lake Worth, Florida in August 2008, it was hailed by the community, political officials and the media as a true example of environmental responsibility in the workplace. The project is not just a "green" building, it is what is called a "living" building, because the entire building is its own ecosystem.

EcoCentre is lush with indoor gardens and a 12-foot waterfall spilling reclaimed water from the second floor down to the first floor. The three floors above provide office space and views into the atrium center of the building.

The building also contains, among other things, a Living Machine®, an innovation that purifies and recycles the building's water.

"EcoCentre will save approximately 200,000 gallons of water a year by recycling water from lavatories and showers, capturing and storing rainwater, using water-efficient plumbing fixtures and capturing condensation from the air-conditioning system," says Costco member John Romano, the man behind this project.

The building is topped by a miniature "wetland project" that is integrated into the building's water system and environmental life cycle.

Other features include a raised flooring system designed to maximize the efficiency of air conditioning and air flow; individual thermostats and windows in each office; an exterior constructed of recycled Chicago brick; countertops that look like marble but are made entirely of recycled crushed bottled glass and environmentally sensitive concrete; a vegetable-based oil used in elevator pistons;



environmentally friendly transportation options encouraged by providing an electric car charger and bike storage; low toxicity paints, sealants and adhesives; waterless urinals and low-flow toilets; and many other environmentally responsible features.

"I realized it's not enough to just recycle, not litter, and love the outdoors," says Romano. "Businesses and community leaders need to enhance the environment." ☐

Costco was the recipient of a number of questions from members wanting to know what the company is doing to lessen its own impact. We put those questions to the experts in charge of various departments.

Lead tired

I recently visited Costco and was annoyed by the sign at the tire shop announcing that Costco was going green. Instead of lead wheel weights, some other substance would apparently be used. What is un-green about lead? But, more to the point, can someone please explain to me how this unknown substance is manufactured and used that makes it greener than a pure element?

**Linda Hayes
Santa Cruz, CA**

Lead is one of 31 chemicals that are on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) list of "priority chemicals" for businesses to eliminate.

There are 200 million autos and light trucks on the nation's roadways, and an average of 4.5 ounces of lead is clipped to the wheel rims of every automobile in the United States. One estimate suggests that 13 percent of tire weights fall off at some point during the lifetime of the tire.

Lead contamination can occur from wheel weights when they fall off vehicles and get in waterways, are put into landfills, are crushed and the resulting dust enters the air supply, or are touched without proper protection or hygiene after contact. The new weights at Costco are a combination of steel and zinc. Within a few months they will be 100 percent steel. For more information on the EPA's lead-elimination requirements, visit www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/minimize/leadtire.htm.

**Robert C. Moyer Jr.
U.S. and Canada Tire Director**

Let there (not) be light

In light of your green articles, I find it disappointing to note that the parking lot lights seem to be left on all night.

**George Galamba
Davis, CA**

To answer your basic question, they are not set up to run all night. The lights are controlled by a computer system that looks at a time-of-day schedule and a photocell that looks at whether the sun is over the horizon. Regardless of the schedule, all exterior lights are cycled off anytime the sun is above the horizon because of the photocell control. The only lights

left on all night are the security lights attached to the exterior wall of the building and a few of the lights under the entrance canopy.

**Craig Peal, Assistant Vice President,
Energy and Building Controls**

Blowing hot and cold

Every time I walk in or out of my Costco warehouse, the doors are always fully open, winter and summer. Obviously, this lets out substantial amounts of expensive heated and cooled air into the parking lot. I'd always assumed this indicated that Costco was not paying attention to energy costs and the environment.

**Melissa Malkin-Weber
Durham, NC**

The entrance and exit doors create quite a challenge for our type of retail format. What we have opted for to date is to manage the problem with a few tools that are not very noticeable to members.

A system in the building actively manages building pressure relative to the outside. This greatly reduces the amount of air exchanged with the outside: Air is pushed out of the building if the building is overpressurized, or drawn into the building if the building is operating at a lower pressure than the outside.

We also install air curtains over the entrance and exit doors. While many have heaters in them, their real purpose is to reduce air exchange between the inside and outside of the building. They are effective when the building is pressurized properly.

**Craig Peal, Assistant Vice President,
Energy and Building Controls**

The "e" is for environment

If Costco was truly going green, *The Costco Connection* would be either e-mailed or at least printed on recycled paper!

**J. Boreta
Goleta, CA**

The paper used to print The Connection includes 10 percent post-consumer waste. Members can ask to cancel their print subscription and receive only the online version of The Costco Connection. See the instructions in the Subscription Changes box in our Dialogue department on page 9. —Editor