

Green hotels leading an environmental movement

By Cheryl Murakami



People are looking for green when it comes to lodging – especially Californians and those traveling to the state.

Kelly May of the California Green Lodging Program was one of several speakers at this month's Green Lodging Workshop.

May told the nearly 50 people in attendance about the state's program which was developed by the California Integrated Waste Management Board to provide travelers a green option for their lodging needs. The California Green Lodging Program recognizes that environmentally aware travelers seek to patronize businesses that reduce pollution, waste, water usage and energy consumption. The program is operated by the Department of General Services as part of the State Travel program. State employees are encouraged to explore green lodging options when on state business.

May gave the following reasons to choose a green hotel:

Average-sized hotels purchase more products in one week than 100 families do in a year. These hotels want at least 50 percent of those purchases to be environmentally preferable products.

Waste generation can be as high as 30 pounds per room per day; as much as 80 percent of these materials can be recycled.

Hospitality industry spends \$3.7 billion a year on energy. Electricity use accounts for 60-70 percent of the utility costs of a typical hotel. Green hotels introduce consumers to energy-efficient products and practices that will reduce energy consumption, therefore lowering energy costs.

Two percent of California's food waste comes from the hotel and lodging industry (112,000 tons per year). This food waste can be composted and/or donated to charities.

Typical hotels use 218 gallons of water per day per occupied room. Water-efficient fixtures can reduce water and sewer bills by 25-30 percent.

The Nov. 17 seminar was the second in a series of sustainability workshops presented by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Green Business Cooperative. The workshop series was created to further the goal of the Green Business Cooperative to establish the Lake Tahoe Basin as an environmental business powerhouse and world sustainability leader.

David Hansen, director of engineering for Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe, hosted and moderated the event.

Four presenters discussed how lodging properties could make their operations and properties more sustainable. Speakers provided advice on how to discover simple measures that can be implemented at a lodging property for little or no cost, to make your organization more green.

Christopher Minnes, general manager of 968 Park Hotel in South Lake Tahoe, familiarized attendees with the characteristics of a green lodging property and offered advice on how to be a greener hotel today at little or no cost. Minnes defined green tourism as aiming for quality, not quantity and suggested that green tourism measures success not only by the number of visitors, but also by the length of their stay, how money is spent, and the quality of the experience.

968 Park Hotel and Embassy Suites are California Green Lodging program certified hotels. There are 200 hotels in the program and another 100 waiting to be certified. The California Green Lodging program provides a database of certified green lodging properties throughout the state at: <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/EPP/greenlodging/>.

Rick West of NuTek International talked about ozone laundry systems. An ozone laundry system reduces hot water usage by 95 percent, cuts total water usage by 30-40 percent, reduces drying times by 30-60 percent, requires no softeners and improves linen life by 20 percent. An ozone laundry system substantially cuts energy usage and reduces gas and utility costs.

Chuck Smith of Genesis Solar suggested that a shift has occurred in public awareness making green practices or sustainability increasingly consumer driven. Smith discussed alternative energy systems for lodging and commercial properties and offered valuable resources on rebate and incentive programs that could substantially reduce a projects cost.

For more information on the Green Business Cooperative, go to www.tahoechamber.org. Click on the Green Business logo on the home page or call (775) 588.1728. The workshops are free and open to anyone.

Cheryl Murakami is a member of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Green Business Cooperative.