



Symposium to plant seeds of green thinking

By Joan Broz | Daily Herald Columnist

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Good ideas bear repeating.

Sharing ideas is the premise of the 2008 Sustainable Cities Symposium hosted by the village of Lisle, Benedictine University and Morton Arboretum.

The third annual state symposium promotes environmental issues. It will explore transportation, green community initiatives and new ways to reduce the environmental footprint. It offers participants the opportunity to exchange ideas and make contacts.

Organizers expect more than 250 municipal officials, educators, planners, nonprofit representatives and interested citizens from across Illinois to attend.

"Sustainable" refers to the design and implementation of environmental and energy-efficient practices. It meets the needs of the present without adversely affecting future generations. It educates future stewards of the earth.

The daylong event hopes to illuminate green practices, renewable energies, alternative fuel, land use planning, transportation needs, storm water management, farmland protection and waste management. On the docket are group sessions, exhibit displays and distinguished speakers.

Lisle Mayor Joseph Broda will deliver the opening address, followed by the keynote address by Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, chairman of the Illinois Great Lakes Commission and the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council.

The green council, which organizes the symposium, serves as a resource for municipalities and educational institutions throughout the state. One year ago, legislation was enacted that gave the council the responsibility to work with state agencies to develop policies that reduce pollution, incorporate conservation and promote green policies into government operations.

"Having the symposium in Lisle reflects the local effort to be good environment stewards and its commitment to sustainability," said Eric Ertmoed, village management analyst. "The village of Lisle is looking at the symposium as an opportunity to study and improve the building and effectiveness of our village operations. Our employee sustainability committee will assess how each of our current activities impacts the environment. We will set goals to green up our operations more than what we do now."

The symposium hopes to shorten the learning curve on important environmental and conservation issues and encourage a trickle-down process within communities. Attention is on effective ideas and resilient examples in urban and suburban settings. Last year's symposium featured a grassroots movement to help with global warming by reducing carbon emissions at the local level.

"At the heart of the green movement is that you might need to pay a little now to get the savings later," said Jamie Caston, environment policy advisor for Quinn's office. "People are catching on because they want to save money and resources as well."

To prepare students to lead the sustainability transformation, Benedictine University began Sustainable Business and Sustainable Leadership concentrations in its Master of Business Administration program this fall.

The school's new three-year plan called "Years for the Environment" began with students, staff and faculty reading and discussing Elizabeth Kolbert's book "Field Notes From a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change." Students will clean campus lake areas of invasive species. Its food service uses disposable items made from potato and cornstarch and china when possible.

Ertmoed recently reported to the village board that Lisle's model recycling efforts began its sustainability efforts.

"We have offered curbside recycling to residents for 20 years," Ertmoed said. "We are expanding our fleet of hybrid vehicles, partnered with the park district to reduce our pesticide use in public areas, and what we plan to do now is take a compressive look at our programs and learn from other communities what has worked and what didn't. We want to use our resources to the maximum."

The symposium agenda ranges from Keeneyville Elementary District 20's harnessing wind turbines for electricity from wind farms, to managing storm water with rain gardens with national land planner Phil Stuepfert.

"(Lisle) needs to be proactive in our environmental efforts," Ertmoed said. "In the early '90s the big words were environmental awareness and conservation. The technology and energy efficiency have grown and we now need to look at adapting things that will make us sustainable. We will finish our internal sustainability plan and then reach out to local residents and businesses to help them in the best way possible."

In these uncertain financial times and to help cities send personnel and have interested residents come, there is no cost to attend the symposium. The Lisle Hyatt is offering visiting delegates reduced room rates and has arranged a complimentary shuttle service to the symposium. The arboretum will offer attendees free admission to its outdoor museum following the symposium.

On Friday, Oct. 24, registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Krasa Student Center on the university's Lisle campus, 5700 College Ave. Speakers and workshops are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register in advance, go to GreenSolutions.il.gov.

To learn more, Caston recommends checking out dsireusa.org and standingupforillinois.org. To receive the Sustainable Cities News and Updates, register with her at jamie.caston@illinois.gov.

The Sustainable Cities Symposium is one of three the state has each year such as the Sustainable Universities Symposium in the summer. Each event is a catalyst for community action directed toward improving practical solutions and understanding.

Adopting a green mindset will lead to a cleaner and healthier environment for all. It is the least we can do for our children's children.

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