



Devens does Earth Day right



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An endangered Blanding's turtle was part of a display at yesterday's second annual Earth Day event put on by the Devens Enterprise Commission at the Devens Community Center. Nashoba Publishing/John Love

DEVENS -- When special vitamins that go into health drinks arrive at Sunny Delight Beverage Co.'s factory in Littleton, manager Jeff Gagner makes sure all the 2-foot-tall drums they are shipped in are saved once they're empty.

Donating the cardboard drums to school art programs has already saved the company \$2,000 in hauling recyclables this year. And the sturdy plywood taken from shipping crates -- which the company once paid \$80 per pound to get rid of -- now has Devens DPW, Littleton Electric & Light Department and other organizations fighting to take it for free, Gagner says.

At the SpringHill by Marriott in Devens, two trash compactors that replaced 10-yard trash bins slashed the cost of having them emptied by more than 90 percent. And the state is stepping up its efforts to match up workers at different companies in Devens to carpool together for their commute.

There are countless ways to make your business green. And more than 150 representatives and workers from companies across the region exchanged their ideas yesterday as they gathered for the Devens Enterprise Commission's second annual Make Every Day Earth Day event.

The event featured 18 exhibition booths that showcased such green-technology businesses as Evergreen Solar and American Superconductor, which makes wind turbine components. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Bristol-Myers Squibb showed 6-month-old Blanding's turtles, an endangered species that they have been trying to protect, while representatives from the Devens Recycling Center explained how their expertise in recycling construction debris helps save the planet.

Many of the exhibitors also work together on a daily basis to trade recyclables through the Devens Enterprise Commission's EcoStar program. When a company has bubble-wrap to throw away, for example, the program finds another company that needs it to ship products, saving both parties the expense while reducing their carbon footprints.

The program also teaches participating companies how to save energy and cut costs.

Being a model eco-friendly industrial park has been Devens' motto since the Army base once housed there closed in 1996. Now, with 4,000 employees working on the site, Devens has a lot of potential to further grow in that direction, said Dona Neely, director of EcoStar.

Event-goers said they enjoyed the exhibits and trivia questions that EcoStar prepared.

"I didn't know I could save \$75 a year by yelling at my daughter to shut off the computer at night," Sharon Larsen, a quality engineer for Bristol-Myers Squibb, joked after taking the trivia quiz.

Her co-worker, Santosh Tharkude, said events like this one make you become more aware of things you take for granted.