

January 2007 | [Green Scene](#)

## Choice News

### Conscious Choice to host Sierra Club's Energy Film Festival

In an effort to increase awareness and action here in Chicago, the Sierra Club and *Conscious Choice* are hosting The Energy Film Festival, February 6th, 8th, 25th and March 2nd at scattered sites throughout the city like the Funky Buddha Lounge and Yoga Now Studios, showcasing a series of films that address energy and global warming issues head on.

Global warming has finally reached the realm of reality, not just theory. With Al Gore's box office hit, *An Inconvenient Truth*, laying out the problem in a clear, no-nonsense way, it's hard to believe that anyone would question human impact on the Earth's atmosphere. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger has stopped driving his gas-guzzling Hummer in the name of curbing global warming!

The Energy Film Festival was created in response to the overwhelming success of *An Inconvenient Truth* and other increasingly green-themed movies. The festival is designed to bring neighbors together, and interact with experts to achieve a consensus on how our nation should move forward on achieving a smarter, cleaner energy future.

"Whether it's global warming, high gas prices or hybrid cars, energy issues have become a priority for most Americans these days," says Sierra Club global warming organizer Colleen Sarna, "These film screenings are a fun way for people to meet others concerned with the issue, while also learning ways to create a cleaner energy future."

Innovative technologies in the office and at home are reducing energy use, while preserving quality of life. While these actions are encouraging, the Sierra Club says we need more aggressive action, and fast. Scientists project that we need to reduce global warming emissions by 80 percent over the next 50 years to avoid global catastrophe. While this may seem like a daunting task, it is possible.

"There is no silver bullet solution for global warming," Sarna continues, "It's going to take a combination of inspired government leadership on all levels and smart energy choices at home to combat global warming, but we can do it. It's a matter of educating everyone from



### Don't Get Mad, Get Active

Why are the Yellowstone National Park bison being slaughtered? During winter months, a portion of the Yellowstone buffalo population migrates outside of the Park in search of better forage. Under a cooperative agreement (Interagency Bison Management Plan) among federal and state government agencies, the Montana Department of Livestock hazes buffalo and engages in a capture, test, and slaughter program that has resulted in the deaths of more than 3,000 Yellowstone buffalo since the mid 1980s. The Montana Department of Livestock and the U.S. Department of Agriculture claim that these cattle are at risk of contracting brucellosis from Yellowstone's buffalo, a disease originally brought to wildlife from European cattle. It is extremely important to note that there has never been a documented case of a wild buffalo transmitting brucellosis to livestock. Learn how you can help save these national treasures at [buffalofieldcampaign.org](http://buffalofieldcampaign.org).

### What Counts

— *Compiled by Jenny Rough*

#### 37

Percentage of Americans who plan to make New Year's resolutions to save money and pay down debt.

#### 24

Percentage of people who succeed in keeping their New Year's resolutions.

#### 972 million

Amount of gift card dollars Americans left unredeemed in 2005.

#### 9,000

Dollars the average American family owes in credit card debt (almost triple compared to two decades ago).

#### 50

Median gift, in dollars, an individual donates to a charity after a major

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The films featured at this free film fest will range from the funny (Earth to America featuring comics Steve Martin, Robin Williams and Jack Black) to the serious (Out of Balance—a look at the influence ExxonMobil has on government and the media). Each screening will include expert speakers, discussions, action items and more information on how to fight against global warming. For a detailed schedule of dates, films and venues, visit [illinois.sierraclub.org](http://illinois.sierraclub.org).

— Becki Clayborn

disaster.

**3 billion**  
Dollars Richard Branson pledged to donate over the next decade to fight global warming.

**30,000**  
Years it would take to win the Powerball lottery if you bought 50 tickets a week.

**Sources:** Consumer Reports National Research Center survey, *Money* magazine, *Newsweek Business*, Indiana University Center on Philanthropy survey, BBC News, [CNN.com](http://CNN.com) interview of odds expert Michael Orkin.



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### FamilyFarmed.org Expo Returns for Third Year

As Chicago’s organic food market continues to grow unabated, alongside a groundswell of resistance to factory farming, local food planners and the farmers they help support are hoping to turn Chicagoans on to the benefits of a fair, local, organic, family farmed system. For the third year in a row, these benefits, along with many local growers, will be on display at the FamilyFarmed.org Expo, to be held at the Chicago Cultural Center on March 23 and 24.

Everything seems to be “organic” these days, but for the Midwest family farmers who grow our earthy-friendly organic food it’s not just a fad—it’s about healthy food, soil and families right here at home.

“Local and organic family farmers are today’s real heroes, and this EXPO is a tribute to them,” explains Jim Slama, president of Sustain, the organizer of the show. “Going to the EXPO is so much fun; it’s a big farmers market in the middle of March. You can taste and take home fresh vegetables and cheese, grass-fed meats, baked goods, honey and more.”

The two-day event features a dozen workshops on topics like “Eating Organic on a Dime” and “Natural and Organic: Truth or Dare?” A fun children’s corner, great food-related movies, and cooking demos featuring Chicago’s finest chefs like Rick Bayless and Gale Gand are all part of the experience along with over 100 exhibits set up by organizations promoting a more “organic” Chicago.

“There is a movement rising in America that is demanding healthier, more nutritious food,” says famed Chicago TV journalist Bill Kurtis, a strong supporter of local food systems who introduced his Tallgrass Beef brand of grassfed meats at the EXPO and spoke about the importance of knowing where your food comes from. “The FamilyFarmed.org EXPO is ground zero for an exchange of ideas and action plans that drives the energy for change,” he continued. “Its contribution is remarkable.”

The FamilyFarmed.org EXPO is sponsored by Goodness Greeness, Whole Foods Market, and the City of Chicago. Visit [FamilyFarmed.org](http://FamilyFarmed.org).

— Cathy Morgan



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### Green Exchange Creates Revolutionary Business Space in Chicago

In a development that is hoped to anchor Chicago’s push to become the “Green Silicon Valley,” the city’s first real estate venture exclusively devoted to Green business will open next year.

Baum Development has begun construction on Green Exchange, the first entrepreneurial business community of its kind committed to environmental sustainability, and positive social impact.



A familiar landmark along Chicago's Kennedy Expressway, Green Exchange is known for formerly housing The Frederick Cooper Lamp Company (1960-2005) and the Vassar Swiss Underwear Company (1900-1960). This adaptive reuse development, located at 2545 West Diversey Avenue, will be leased exclusively to tenants offering sustainable products or services, who are actively working to expand the green marketplace.

The four-story 250,000 square foot concrete building will be renovated according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified standards and is scheduled for completion in mid-2007. Currently, Baum Development has signed preliminary letters of intent with several tenants including recent Greenworks award winner Consolidated Printing, Performance Bike and Greenmaker Home Supply.

"More than a building, we are creating a new community," says Barry Bursak, the visionary founder of Green Exchange, who partnered with Baum Realty and Green architect Kevin Pierce to make this dream a reality. "The exchange will be the first venue in America to bring together sustainable companies, products, and services to enable the public to make significant changes for the environment."

Building amenities will include an energy efficient environment with a green roof, clean air quality, green courtyard, T3/wifi internet access, bike rooms, event space, car sharing services, priority hybrid parking, and a high-concept "educational foyer" in the lobby of the building.

The Green Exchange has the potential to be a model for redevelopment generally, not just 'green' development," says project architect Kevin Pierce. "It has smart developers who acknowledge the sustainable advantage, a good team, experienced tenants, and an enlightened city government. It will make money."

Most important, Pierce adds, the building itself is seen only as one part of an integrated strategy for sustainable business development. Jobs, a strong community base, and an overall vision focused on long-term viability are what will make the project work.

"The collaborative community will not be limited to the building's tenants," adds owner David Baum. "The interactive Green Exchange Web site will be a larger, virtual version of the building, including people from across the nation, serving as the go-to place for information, discussion and opinion on green products and services."

For more information visit [greenexchange.com](http://greenexchange.com).

— Charles Shaw

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## Waterless Toilets Save Water—and Lives

When it comes to human impact on the environment, there is perhaps no clearer point of encounter than the toilet. At five gallons per flush, three flushes per day (minimum), the U.S., and its population of 300,000,000 flushes, well, a lot of water down the toilet.

Worldwide, illnesses related to poor sanitation and hygiene kill more than 3 million people a year. With water resources growing scarcer and the high cost of sewage service, variations on the composting toilet are, of necessity, on the rise.

One important outpost of the eco-toilet trend is the Mexican town of Tepoztlan. Long a bastion of radicals and freethinkers, the town is home to a diverse community of indigenous peasant farmers, New Age expats, artists and a small group of global health professionals who have dedicated themselves to perfecting the waterless loo.

When American expat Ron Sawyer found his way to Tepoztlan after years of service for UNICEF's Child Survival campaign in Kenya, he was surprised to find more than 100 waterless toilets already in use. It was a head start to establishing an ecological sanitation (eco-san) pilot program with support from the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA) and the UN Development Programme. The program, known as Tepozt-eco (a play on Tepozteco, a nearby Aztec pyramid), is

one of three SIDA-funded eco-san pilot programs worldwide.

Cesar Añorve, a local architect, developed an innovative toilet that separates liquids from solids to facilitate safer handling. Sawyer took Añorve's design to the next step by closing the nutrient cycle and preserving the dried solids for use as soil conditioner. Urine, which carries no pathogens, is collected separately and used as fertilizer, with no risk of spreading disease.

Another designer, Francisco Arroyo further developed the mechanics, which he calls orinoponics (or the less technical but far more fun "peepee-ponics") by mixing a handful of compost into a few gallons of urine, which breeds a microorganism that digests carbon. By adding this "fermented urine" to a pile of dried plant matter it causes the plant matter to be transformed, relatively quickly, into rich soil.

This simple, low-cost technology could play a crucial role in conserving and protecting water, reducing germ-transmission and returning precious nutrients to the soil for farming.

Arno Rossmarin, communications director of the Stockholm Environment Institute, believes that ecological sanitation may be the only way to avert a global phosphate crisis. In nature, nitrogen, potassium and phosphate are all returned to soil in animal wastes. But a century of sewage has diverted vast amounts of these essential elements to the bottom of the oceans, whence they can never be recovered. While phosphorus is essential for agriculture, its build-up in aquatic ecosystems causes eutrophication (the elimination of oxygen from the marine environment). Meanwhile, the world's known reserves of mined phosphorus are growing dangerously scarce. Visit [ecosanres.org](http://ecosanres.org).

— *Jeff Conant*

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## Chicago First Eco-Industrial Park

The idea behind an Eco-Industrial Park is "to symbiotically situate affiliated businesses to shorten delivery distances and transform waste byproducts of one industry into the raw materials of another."

Christy Webber Landscapes, a rapidly growing landscape construction and maintenance company, has developed the 12-acre Greenworks Eco-Industrial Park, master planned by the Chicago-based architecture and design firm Farr Associates, designers of the Chicago Center for Green Technology. Greenworks is designed to serve Chicago's landscape industry and is the first Eco-Industrial Park in the Midwest.

The public infrastructure at Greenworks also includes a number of innovations that are first in the Midwest. Rainwater that falls on private property is filtered by passing through an integrated "treatment train" of Best Management Practices (BMP)'s including bioswales—landscape elements designed to remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water—and a porous-bottomed detention basin. Rainwater that falls on streets is filtered into the gravel base below. The public lighting uses induction lamp technology, another Midwest first. A tower-mounted wind turbine serves as the visual icon for the Eco-Industrial Park.

Christy Webber Landscapes also commissioned Farr Associates to design their headquarters building, the anchor structure in the Greenworks Eco-Industrial Park. The new LEED-Gold rated complex consists of an 8,500 square-foot office building and 10,000 square-foot storage building, organized around a shared courtyard. The rooftop is complete with an intensive vegetative green roof, a greenhouse and garden with six large maple trees.

Designed to accommodate five years of business growth, the facility is already full of staff as of its opening day, December 1, 2006. Behind the building, an acre of work yard allows for storage, sorting and composting of landscape materials. The courtyard and roof is conceived to showcase landscape treatments and materials for clients.

The building is exceptionally green. The facility is 55 percent more energy efficient than other buildings of this type. The building materials all emphasize local production, using healthy

materials and recycled content. Its mechanical design integrates both earth (geothermal) and sky (solar) systems.

“Landscaping is always talked about as a green business,” says Webber, owner of both GreenWorks and Christy Webber Landscapes, “but really we’re not. Our challenge now is to figure out how to recycle our waste back into the system, cut back on the amount of fossil fuels we burn, and push the envelope on how urban landscapes can better the environment for an entire city.”

This project was featured at the Museum of Contemporary Art’s companion exhibit to Massive Change, entitled “Sustainable Architecture in Chicago: Works in Progress,” thus furthering the distinction of Chicago as the greenest city in the nation.

— *Charles Shaw*



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