

Business Plus

Senior Editor/Business: James Meier • (760) 778-4623 • business@thedesertsun.com

STEEL AND SHADE
THE ARCHITECTURE OF
DONALD WEXLER

PALM SPRINGS ART
MUSEUM

101 Museum Drive
Downtown Palm Springs
psmuseum.org

Donald Wexler, Steel House, 1962,
photograph © Juergen Nogai, 2010



Only at mydesert.com

SIGN UP FOR BREAKING NEWS ALERTS • BOOK A TEE TIME • FIND SHOWTIMES FOR MOVIES

Looking for trailblazers



Entrepreneurs, inventors see opportunity in valley sun and wind resources

BY K KAUFMANN
The Desert Sun

Before there was Silicon Valley, back in the 1970s, there was a bunch of guys tinkering with computers and writing programs in their garages around Palo Alto and San Jose.

Forty years later, the Coachella

Valley is out to become California's new high-tech center, but this time with a focus on renewable energy and clean tech, drawing on the region's abundant sun and wind.

The home-grown tinkerers are already here, though the valley's older demographics have created a

different profile than the founding techno-geeks up north.

They are retirees, midlife refugees and a sprinkling of local professionals looking to change themselves and the world around them. The valley's abundant sun, wind and blistering summer electric bills have become their sources

of inspiration.

Retired Air Force Col. Ron Savin of Rancho Mirage blunched when he got his first summer bill back in 2006, and ended up inventing a new kind of cool-roof coating now being exported around the world.

Please see ENERGY, D4



JAY CALDERON THE DESERT SUN

Johan Steinlechner stands on his wind turbine invention that he says will operate at wind speeds as low as five miles per hour. The structure stands about 4 feet tall when not on a trailer as pictured.

Catching a gentler breeze

Inventor builds a turbine to compress wind

BY K KAUFMANN
The Desert Sun

Johan Steinlechner of Palm Springs claims to have built a better wind turbine.

His invention, a horizontal cylinder that can work at ground level or on the top of a building, compresses and speeds up the air, potentially producing more electricity than one of the tall windmills in the San Geronio Pass.

"I used to build two-stroke

engines for (motocross) racing; it has to do with air compression," said Steinlechner, 54, who is a bit of a desert hybrid himself, sporting a cowboy hat and speaking with the accent of his native Austria.

"When you double the wind speed, the power increases eight times," he said.

Another plus, Steinlechner said, is that his machine can produce electricity at wind speeds of 5 mph, versus the 7-9 mph the American Wind Energy Association says is needed to crank up a big vertical turbine.

It also makes minimal noise and poses very little threat to

birds, a problem long associated with large wind turbines, he said.

Steinlechner started working on the machine about seven years ago, he said, after a friend was killed in Iraq.

"The whole world fights about oil," he said. "I wanted to find something where we can replace the oil with wind."

He designed and built the prototype in his back yard, using scrap iron.

The result was a big cylinder, about 15 feet across and four feet high, enclosed in a big box that can be opened at one end to let in the

Please see INVENTOR, D4

College sees zero as perfect number

Campus plans call for 'net-zero' facility five different ways

BY K KAUFMANN
The Desert Sun

By the time it opens in 2014, the College of the Desert's West Valley Campus could have one of the largest solar installations on a community college campus nationwide.

The 10-megawatt project to be built by Southern California Edison is aimed at helping COD achieve another, even more ambitious goal — to create a totally sustainable, net-zero campus.

Steve Renew, COD's facilities director, said the West Valley site, to be located on 119 acres at the corner of Indian Canyon Way and Tramview Road, will be net-zero on five levels — energy use, carbon emissions, water use, waste recycling and construction materials.

The campus will have plenty of green-tech bells and whistles, Renew said, such as a computerized heating and cooling system that sets room temperatures based on historical data, actual outside temperatures and how many people are in a space.

But he said, the core of net zero is getting back to basics.

"People have lived in the desert for centuries," he said. "They were probably net-zero people. It's how to operate in the building and how to live in a space without it being an air-conditioned box."

"You can't stick sustainability on top like icing," added Lance O'Donnell of o2 Architecture in Palm Springs, who is working on the project's master plan

with HGA Architects and Engineers, a Minneapolis-based firm.

"We're not getting to net zero, we're starting at zero," he said.

The planning team is still evaluating all its options for the first phase of the campus, which will include three buildings totaling about 50,000 square feet. When the doors open in 2014, here are some of the things that students and community members might see.

■ "You'll see buildings that are earth-bermed, earth sheltered," which keeps them cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, O'Donnell said.

"We make sure we're capturing the good microclimatic weather — the wind. We want to use it for cross ventilation when it's at the appropriate speed and temperature."

■ Public space in buildings — lobbies and hallways — will be minimized for energy-efficiency. "We have to operate the building differently; maybe lobby spaces don't need air conditioning," Renew said. "People will walk from classroom to classroom (outside)."

■ The campus will have drought-resistant landscaping throughout and might be able to recycle "blowdown water" from wells on the property.

"When a well comes on, it blows water out that for most part soaks back into ground," said Renew. "That would be 3,000 gallons every time it turns on and off. We have some designs to put it in a cistern and use it for site irrigation."

O'Donnell and Renew both said the school is aiming not only for sustainable buildings but "amazing design."

"The cool thing is it will feel like it's always been there," O'Donnell said. "I truly know this will be a place you want to be and stay."

ALL ABOUT BUSINESS



debra gruszecki & k kaufmann

Restaurant open again after brief closure

The term "going bananas" seems to have taken on several new dimensions for Craig Marlar, owner of Bananaz Tropical Grill in Rancho Mirage.

After a temporary closure and the resulting flurry of speculation about a possible permanent shut-down or sale, the restaurant is back, he said.

Marlar owned the original Bananaz in Palm Desert, which burned down in 2004. Earlier this year, he resurrected the once-popular night spot at one of the most iconic locations on Highway 111 — San Diego architect Kendrick Kellogg's structure of redwood beams and rock, tucked

Please see ALL ABOUT, D5

Valley home ownership holds firm

BY MIKE PERRAULT
The Desert Sun

The Coachella Valley's homeownership rate held steady over the past decade despite the recession and the addition of more than 53,000 new homes built over the years, new Census data shows.

About 67 percent of all occupied homes in the Coachella Valley are owned by the people living in them, down a percentage point from a decade ago, the U.S. Census Bureau reported.

The percentage of homes that owners occupy varied widely depending on the city, the 2010 Census figures showed.

In Indian Wells, for instance, the homeownership rate was 88.6 percent. In Desert Hot Springs, 47.2 percent of homes were owned by the occupants.

The measurement accounts only for occupied homes, Census Bureau officials said.

The actual homeownership rate would be lower if vacant homes were included in the calculation.

Economist John Husing with Economics & Politics Inc. said it's no surprise that more affluent communities such as Indian Wells, La Quinta and Rancho Mirage have higher owner occupancy rates.

The fact that the Coachella Valley added tens of thousands of houses and

More homeowners

The number of homeowners in the nine Coachella Valley cities jumped to 95,978 from 62,234, new U.S. Census figures show. The number of renters climbed to 45,489 from 33,270.

Change from 2000 to 2010

CATHEDRAL CITY

Homeowners: 9,151 - 10,769; 65.2 percent - 63.2 percent

Renters: 4,876 - 6,278; 34.8 percent - 36.8 percent

COACHELLA

Homeowners: 2,766 - 5,586; 60.9 percent - 62.1 percent

Renters: 1,880 - 3,412; 39.1 percent - 37.9 percent

DESERT HOT SPRINGS

Homeowners: 2,766 - 4,166; 47.2 percent - 48.2 percent

Renters: 3,093 - 4,484; 52.8 percent - 51.8 percent

INDIAN WELLS

Homeowners: 1,756 - 2,285; 88.6 percent - 83.2 percent

Renters: 226 - 460; 11.4 percent - 16.8 percent

condos over the past decade also comes as no surprise, Husing said.

"This is about land — where the land is available," Husing said. "One of the places with the most building in Southern California was the Coachella Valley. Particularly down-valley, places like Indio and La Quinta."

INDIO

Homeowners: 7,794 - 15,274; 56.2 percent - 65.3 percent

Renters: 6,077 - 8,104; 43.8 percent - 34.7 percent

LA QUINTA

Homeowners: 6,879 - 11,152; 81.5 percent - 75.2 percent

Renters: 1,566 - 3,668; 18.5 percent - 24.8 percent

PALM DESERT

Homeowners: 12,827 - 15,171; 66.9 percent - 65.6 percent

Renters: 6,357 - 7,946; 33.1 percent - 34.4 percent

PALM SPRINGS

Homeowners: 12,480 - 13,349; 60.8 percent - 58.7 percent

Renters: 8,036 - 9,397; 39.2 percent - 41.3 percent

RANCHO MIRAGE

Homeowners: 5,654 - 8,829; 83.0 percent - 80.3 percent

Renters: 1,159 - 1,740; 17.0 percent - 19.7 percent

La Quinta added 12,159 houses and condos over the past decade, the most in the valley. That edged out Indio, where 12,062 more homes were built.

Indian Wells added the fewest homes at 1,294, followed by Cathedral City's 3,102 housing units.

James Brownyard, chief operating of-

Housing units added in 2010

Cathedral City: 3,102

Coachella: 4,879

Desert Hot Springs: 3,868

Indian Wells: 1,294

Indio: 12,062

La Quinta: 12,159

Palm Desert: 9,052

Palm Springs: 3,971

Rancho Mirage: 2,427

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

ficer with Palm Desert-based Desert Valleys Builders Association, recalled the boom years when 8,800 homes or more were being built every year. That's down to about 600 a year now, Brownyard said.

Census data

The 2010 census data showed 95,978 houses or condos in nine valley cities were owned by the occupants, compared to 62,234 in the 2000 census.

Coachella, Desert Hot Springs and Indio saw the percentage of owner-occupied homes rise over the decade, while Cathedral City, Indian Wells, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage showed declines.

There were 45,489 renters in the 2010 census, up 12,219 from 2000.

Sara Sutachan, senior research analyst

Please see CENSUS, D5

INSIDEBUSINESS

Business Briefs

Business Calendar

Morris Beschloss

D2 Your Business, Your News

D3 Giving Back

D3 Weather

D3

D4

D6

corrections

We correct errors of fact promptly and courteously. If you have a correction or clarification, please contact Senior Editor for News James Meier at (760) 778-4623 or at james.meier@thedesertsun.com

Massage therapist volunteers at Eisenhower

In this weekly feature, The Desert Sun spotlights valley firms performing good deeds.

Here the focus is on three organizations giving back to the community.

Massage skills

Michael Wolfes is a board-certified massage therapist and owner of Michael's Mobile Massage.

For 25 years, Wolfes, who specializes in deep tissue and Reiki energy work, has provided massages to his clients at their homes, offices or hotel rooms.

He also has used his skills as a volunteer two to six hours a week for the past five years at Eisenhower Medical Center in Rancho Mirage.

"I really enjoy volunteering as a massage therapist at Eisenhower," Wolfes said.

"It is so important to give back to your community."

Wolfes, who was professionally trained as a massage therapist in 1986 and



nina ronda
giving back

received more training in 1997-98, is a Certified Licensed Massage Therapist and Certified Reiki Practitioner.

For more information, contact Michael Wolfes at (760) 898-9231 or www.michaelsmobilemassage.com

'Doggie Dinner'

Cooking With Class, a family-owned and -operated culinary school and event destination, recently raised \$3,000 for Guide Dogs of the Desert.

The "Doggie Dinner" fundraising event, hosted by



PHOTO COURTESY STELLA BAKER

Michael Wolfes of Michael's Mobile Massage says he enjoys knowing that he provides comfort and relief to his clients. a

the owners, executive chef Andie Hubka and partner Jane Angwin, featured a four-course dinner with wines and dessert.

The chefs, sous chefs, staff dietitians, kitchen and wait staff all donated their time. Wine ambassador Matilde Parente did as well, present-

ing four wines donated by California vintners Cartledge & Browne.

Adding to the evening's fun was guest guide dog Dunkin, a golden retriever, and her handler and puppy-raiser, Diane Jordan.

Guide Dogs of the Desert provides safe mobility, lov-

ing companionship and independence to the blind through the use of a guide dog.

Information:

■ **Cooking With Class**, (760) 777-1161; www.cookingwithclassquinta.com.

■ **Guide Dogs of the Desert**, (760) 329-6257; www.guidedogsoft-hedesert.com

Scholarships

The Coachella Valley Alumnae Panhellenic organization awarded \$48,000 in scholarships to local students on May 7. The funds were raised through its annual Scholarship Benefit and Patron Program.

The recipients, two young women from each of the eight public high schools in the Coachella Valley, were awarded a \$3,000 scholarship toward costs of attending a four-year college or university.

For more than 54 years,

the Coachella Valley Alumnae Panhellenic has promoted leadership, scholarship and enlightenment by offering annual scholarship awards, as well as educational and informational functions in the community.

In addition to awarding annual scholarships, the CV Panhellenic also supports school libraries in February with a book drive and cash donation, and every December conducts a toy drive for the children at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission.

The CVAP is a volunteer organization of more than 170 women who are members of one of the 27 National Panhellenic Conference sororities.

For further information, contact www.coachellapanhellenic.org.

What is your business doing to give back to the Coachella Valley? Share your thoughts with us by e-mailing **Nina Ronda** at nina.ronda@thedesertsun.com for our feature *The Business of Giving Back*.



COURTESY OF JILL GIEGERICH

Jill Giegerich of Joshua Tree works in her desert garden, a model of sustainable planting based on the principles of permaculture, an approach to design based on nature.

Finding new life in her garden

BY K KAUFMANN

The Desert Sun

On a recent morning in Joshua Tree, Jill Giegerich dug into the rich, composted soil of her new desert garden, and the earth moved.

"I dug my glasses out of my pocket to take a closer look," the 58-year-old artist wrote on her blog, *Mind in the Sand*.

"I don't know how else to put it — the soil was alive! ... I got down closer and saw that it was full of life — worms, squirming things, incredibly small glistening entities, all ploughing themselves back and forth in the humus."

Giegerich's garden and blog are part of a mid-life transformation that has taken her from the fast-track art scene in Los Angeles through a messy divorce to her current life in the high desert, promoting innovative ideas for sustainable homes and communities.

In addition to her garden, she and her partner, Sequoia Smith, are renovating a home as a model of permaculture, which is the science and art of designing sustainable living systems based on nature.

"We're now in the process of gutting (the house) and reworking the water pipes for gray water," she said. "We're going to do solar water heat."

"In permaculture, you start right in the center and work your way out. We're reworking all the systems in the house and then we will put in long, double-glazed windows on the south side," she said.

A greenhouse, fruit trees and trees providing food and shelter for desert animals will follow, she said.

Taking the permaculture concept one step further, Giegerich is also the creative spark behind Transition Joshua Tree, a grassroots group working to build a resilient and sustainable local economy.

The group takes its name from Transition US, an umbrella organization of similar community initiatives formed to find local solutions to the challenges of climate change, the shifting economy and the need to make the transition from fossil fuels.

"If an ecosystem is resilient and receives a shock — a flood or a drought — it has more of an ability to bounce back," said Carolyn Stayton, executive director of Transition U.S. "It's the bounce-back part of that we're trying to build with the Transition town movement."

About 90 local groups are officially registered with the national organization, Stayton said, and dozens more, such as Transition Joshua Tree, are forming.

"I think people are seeing — they are feeling in their lives — we are at a critical tipping point in human survival," Giegerich said. "The decisions we make now are all about whether we are going to continue existing on the planet."

"This model is a way we can do it, but we have to do it now and we have to do it with our whole heart."

High utility bill sparks ideas

Inventor spurred to create rubber seal to insulate homes

BY K KAUFMANN

The Desert Sun

Having a conversation with Ron Savin — inventor, retired Air Force colonel and founder of Hyperseal, a green-tech firm in Palm Desert — is a bit like stepping into a vortex.

The Rancho Mirage resident is a real-life rocket scientist with a wall full of U.S. patents, and interviews with him are often interrupted with quick demonstrations of his latest, cutting-edge ideas, many of which involve recycled tires.

"Most of our coatings take rubber dust and revulcanize it back to rubber," said Savin, showing off one of his newer products, a do-it-yourself truck bed liner that can be applied with a paint brush and dries in four to six hours. "Rubber doesn't erode or get wet. It's wonderful over corrosion."

"There are so many tires; they're still burying billions of them" in landfills, he said.

The inspiration for Hyperseal was Savin's move to the desert six years ago, followed by

his first summer electric bills. He started tinkering with white paints and eventually came up with a cool-roof coating that can put significant dents in home energy bills.

With Savin, one idea seems to lead organically to another. Since starting Hyperseal in 2007, he has developed rubberized caulks, pool and road coatings, boat and truck bed liners and zinc-based paints that protect against corrosion.

The company now has about 10 employees at its offices in Palm Desert and recently added another 10,000 square feet of manufacturing space.

Jim Busch, the company's director of marketing, said the business's biggest challenge — besides keeping up with the colonel's steady stream of ideas for new products — is distribution, especially in the U.S.

Hyperseal is now exporting its products to Australia, South Africa, South Korea and Sweden, while also exploring possibilities in the Middle East, he said. But for the American market, the company needs to get into big-box hardware stores.

"Distribution is so well set in



OMAR ORNELAS THE DESERT SUN

Inventor Ron Savin, 80, holds a partially painted piece of roof as a sample of his invention, which is a paint that is able to reduce heat absorption on surfaces by 60 degrees.

this country, it's hard to break in," Busch said.

The colonel's age is another factor. While Savin's not likely to stop inventing — "I'd get bored," he said — he's beginning to look for partners or possibly a buyer for Hyperseal.

Even if he sells out, Savin expects to keep the Palm

Desert office running as a "manufacturing lab," he said.

But figuring out how to draw more inventors and start-ups such as Hyperseal to the valley may take some more tinkering, he said.

"We should have industry here; it's a very good place," he said. "I don't know how to attract people here."

ENERGY: Promoting innovation, start-ups

Continued from D1

When a friend of his died in Iraq, Palm Springs resident Johan

Steinlechner reacted by deciding to build a better wind turbine, now being tested out at a factory in Beaumont.

The valley has had little in the way of creative and intellectual infrastructure to nurture such efforts, leaving innovators such as Savin and

Steinlechner working in relative isolation.

"It's like a little island, and no one can talk to you," said Steinlechner, who built the prototype for his turbine in his backyard.

That could change soon.

As industrial-scale solar projects break ground on public land east of the valley, a new business and innovation center is set to open in Palm Springs specifically to incu-

bate green business.

College of the Desert's West Valley Campus will open its doors in 2014, adding a green tech research and training campus to the mix.

"We really hope to attract and expect to attract public-private ventures, an incubator space if you will, so firms of like mind that have the same interests and need space can find space at the college and our students and

their businesses can interact," said Steven Renew, facilities director at COD.

"We're talking the sort of facility where (students) go through the program and there's a place for them to come back to," he said.

K Kaufmann covers energy and green technology, retail, health care and agriculture for The Desert Sun. She can be reached at kkaufmann@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4622.

INVENTOR: Developing a new kind of turbine

Continued from D1

wind through a series of vents.

A commercial-scale prototype measuring 50 feet across has been built and is now being tested at Anderson Charnesky Structural Steel, a factory in Beaumont.

He also has been gearing up to promote the device, and attract investors, at the American Wind Energy Associa-

tion's annual conference, a major industry trade show this week in Anaheim.

Steinlechner has so far funded the project himself but needs seed capital for further testing and federal certifications.

His long-term vision for the device ranges from rooftop turbines powering luxury hotels to smaller models producing energy in developing

countries to mini-versions mounted on traffic lights.

He also wants to open a manufacturing plant in North Palm Springs.

Sandrul Ula, an engineering professor at the University of California, Riverside, has taken an early look at Steinlechner's device. He thinks it has potential, but might be limited to small-scale uses.

"This can never be big elec-

tricity because (that) requires more efficient conversion of wind energy," he said. "It won't scale up. You don't envision a wind farm where hundreds and hundreds of these are next to each other."

Steinlechner intends to prove Ula wrong.

"The small one is already done. Now we have to show the big boys we can do a big one, too," he said.

Oasis Country Club, Palm Desert

On Site Office Open Daily 10-4

OPEN SAT/SUN 12-3

FEATURED HOME \$265,000

- 2Br/2.5Ba • Elevated Lot on 7th Fairway
- Turnkey with Golf Car • Steps to Pool and Spa
- \$289,000 3Br/2Ba • Turnkey with Views
- Elevated Lot with Panoramic Views

WE HAVE LONG TERM & SEASONAL RENTALS

www.Desert-Homes.com

Jeff Overman
Rae Crogan
Mike Kays
Cheryl Overman
760-200-0522

Tarbell REALTORS

Great Buys - Bank Owned Homes - 3% Down

<p>\$300,000 Built 1994</p> <p>Palm Desert 3/2 - 2,185 SF</p>	<p>\$249,900 Built 2005</p> <p>La Quinta 4/2 - 2,112 SF</p>		
<p>This week there are 269 Bank Owned listings for sale in 5 local Coachella Valley Cities.</p> <p>Price ranges from \$30,000 to \$2,995,000.</p> <p>Tell us what you are looking for and we will help you find a GREAT BUY with as little as 3% down.</p> <p>Bank Owned Homes Sell Fast - Don't delay - Call Today</p>			
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <p>Bermuda Dunes 14</p> <p>Cathedral City 46</p> <p>Indio 78</p> <p>La Quinta 61</p> <p>Palm Desert 69</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <p>Total 269</p> </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Bermuda Dunes 14</p> <p>Cathedral City 46</p> <p>Indio 78</p> <p>La Quinta 61</p> <p>Palm Desert 69</p>	<p>Total 269</p>
<p>Bermuda Dunes 14</p> <p>Cathedral City 46</p> <p>Indio 78</p> <p>La Quinta 61</p> <p>Palm Desert 69</p>	<p>Total 269</p>		
<p>Rick Tobin, Broker Lic# 00964253</p> <p>Buyers Call (760) 565-6060</p>			