

## Going Green workshop held by Fay-Penn

BY FRANKLIN LACAVA



**Lee Ann Briggs of the University of Pittsburgh's Small Business Development leads a workshop at Fay-Penn. Franklin LaCava | The Daily Courier**

A small group of area businessmen and women attended a workshop Friday in the offices of Fay-Penn Economic Development Council to learn of ways to adapt environmentally – and often economically friendly – techniques to their companies.

Chaired by Lee Ann Briggs, an environmental consultant at the University of Pittsburgh for the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center (SBDC), put forward a number of innovative business concepts as well as a review of environmental regulations various businesses are subject to as required by State and Federal law. Briggs also discussed incentives in the form of matching grants offered by the Commonwealth for innovative green business solutions.

Briggs touted the Energy Star certification on appliances and building materials as a consumer friendly way to make effective energy choices. She also suggested that any consumer or business compare multiple bids before investing in a new energy system.

The Energy Star designation is a voluntary program administered by the US Environmental Protection Agency established in 1992 by the Clean Air act to rate the efficiency of commonly used products ranging from refrigerators and air conditions to replacement windows and doors. The website may be accessed at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) for more information.

Regarding the newly developing technology of solar panels, Briggs commented that, “Our area has an average of four hours per day of sunlight; five hours of sunlight are need for the panels to be successful. That’s why they are being adapted now in the Western states.”

However, the four hours is an annual average that may be offset by using backup battery systems to supplement the downtime, making some applications of solar panels viable in the area.

“Matching grants up to \$9,500 may be reimbursed for (environmentally friendly) improvements to for profit businesses with less than 100 employees,” she said. “A 50 percent match for any energy efficiency improvement that (yields) a 25 percent efficiency improvement over a year.”

Profit businesses may contact the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Center at 877- 275-3627, to learn more of environmental regulations and green options as well as grant opportunities.

While attendance at the workshop was sparse, there was a general consensus of enthusiasm among the participants.

“Actually I wanted to get some ideas with a green theme in the products I use – mainly in packaging and shipping books,” said Cheryl Gomes, of Greensburg, owner of the online bookshop, Cultural Bookplace. “I wanted to add the green concept to the business. I learned about the green concept and how it is applied in business – more on the technical end. How it impacts the environment and how that can apply to a brick and mortar office.”

Joe Putila, president of Gerome Manufacturing Company, Inc of Smithfield told of his custom sheet metal fabricating firm’s success in reducing emissions from metal coatings.

“I remember we emitted 62,000 pounds of volatile organics in the early 1990’s. Last year we were down to 500 pounds.” Consequently Gerome came into compliance with regulations and the need for the cost of permits. “Basically, it’s a good thing to do,” commented Putila. “We all have to live here and breathe the air and drink the water.”

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