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Illinois Sustainability & Wellness Expo on April 9

March 10, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Alpacas, solar energy panels and raising chickens in your own backyard – there's only one place these all fit under one roof, and that's the Illinois Sustainable Living & Wellness Expo. "Creating Healthy Communities" is the theme for this year's expo, which will run from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday, April 9 at Illinois Wesleyan University's Shirk Center (302 E. Emerson St., Bloomington). The event is free and open to the public.



The expo, which is co-sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) and the Ecology Action Center, offers attendees an enjoyable atmosphere to explore exhibitors, workshops, demonstrations, which provide resources to live more sustainably.

"Sustainable living means to discover ways to live healthier, not just on a personal level, but socially, economically and environmentally," said IWU Wellness Director Missy Smock. "It is indeed about enhancing the health and wellness of all living things, and learning about the intricate connections between our actions and the planet."

Exhibitors and demonstrations will offer participants a glimpse of ways to incorporate sustainability into their lives, from ways to care for your lawn without harmful chemicals, to cooking with local food, installing affordable and sustainable energy systems, and making cloth diapers a viable choice for parents. Also included will be a kid's Green Zone, giving children the chance to learn about sustainability in a fun way, including petting live alpacas. A complete list of exhibitors is available at www.islwe.org.

The Friends of the Trail and Good to Go Commuter Challenge will provide secure, valet bicycle parking for the event. Other event sponsors include WJBC, Prairie Signs, WGLT and Heartland Local Food Network.

Faith and sustainability panel

The expo kicks off with a panel the night of Thursday, April 7 that will focus on what faith organizations can do to promote the care of the planet. The 7 p.m. panel titled "**Faith and Sustainability: What They Have in Common**" in the Joslin Atrium of the Memorial Center (104 E. University St., Bloomington) will feature members of various religions in the Twin Cities, and Brian Sauder of the not-for-profit Faith in Place. The event is free and open to the public.

Free 4-All and Fashion Challenge

Those attending the expo can take part in the annual Free 4-All on Saturday, allowing the drop off of unwanted clothes, toys and household items. In exchange, participants can walk away with unwanted items of others. The concept of the Free 4-All is to encourage reusing items, rather than sending them to the landfill, said Smock. Expo goers can also submit an entry in the Affordable Fashion Challenge, which requires participants to "design on a dime." Those at the expo will see the designs during the Affordable Fashion Show. Go to www.islwe.org for additional information.

Mad City Chickens

This year the expo will feature the movie *Mad City Chickens* at 3 p.m. Saturday in the North Classroom of the Shirk Center. The 2008 film, sponsored by the Heartland Local Food Network, takes a sometimes serious, sometimes whimsical, look at the people who keep urban chickens in their backyards. To see the film's trailers, to go www.tarazod.com/filmsmadchicks.

Electronics recycling

In conjunction with the expo, the City of Bloomington will hold its semi-annual residential, electronic devices recycling event on Saturday. Outside the Shirk Center, the public can drop off up to 10 electronic items and components. Sims Recycling Solutions (SRS) will then remove hazardous materials from unwanted, obsolete or damaged electronic products and dispose of them in an environmentally sound fashion.

For additional information on the expo, contact Smock at (309) 556-3334 or go to www.islwe.org.

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