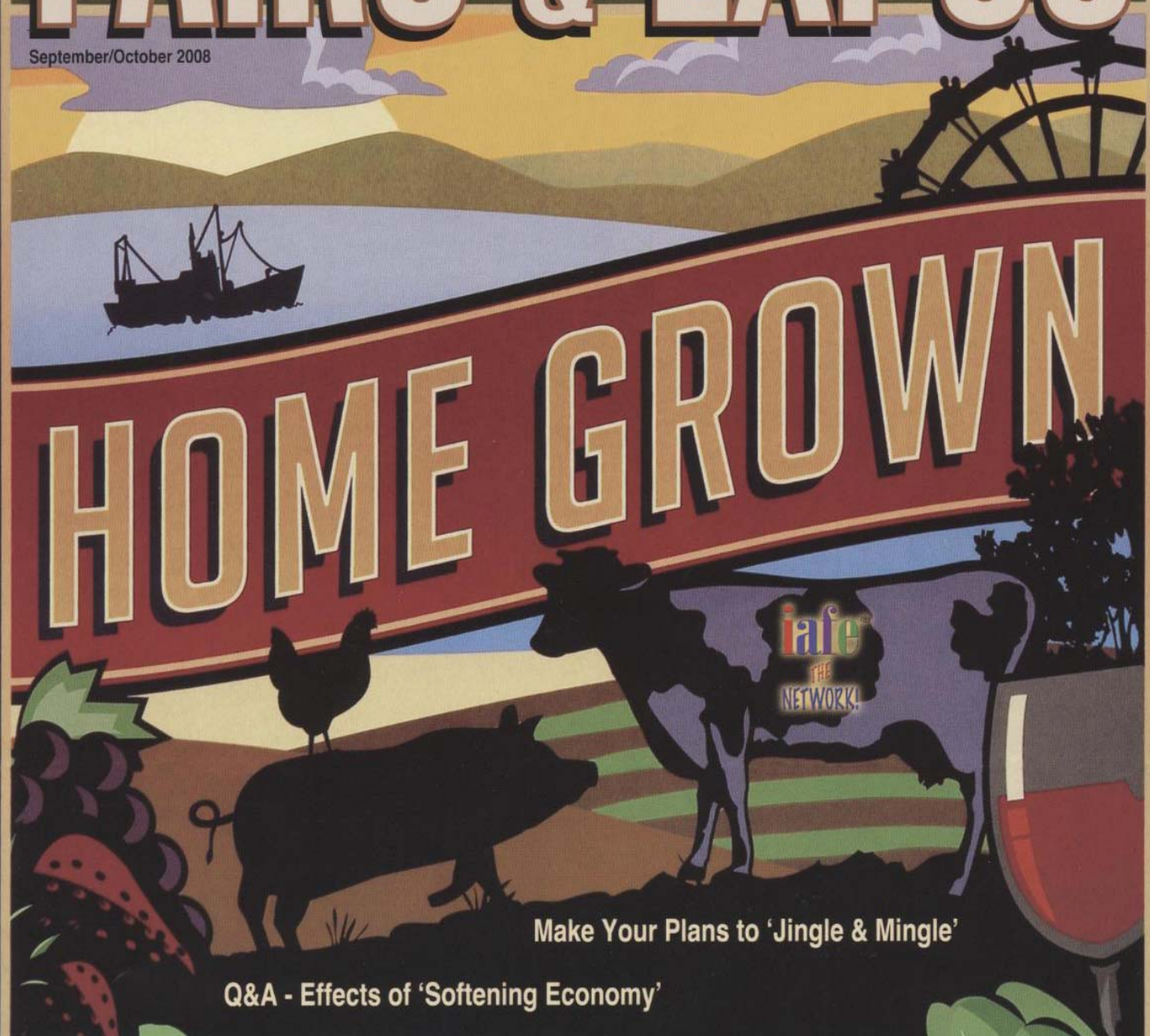


FAIRS & EXPOS

September/October 2008



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Q&A - Effects of 'Softening Economy'

Marin Conservation Corps
27 Larkspur Street
San Rafael, CA 94901-4820

Greenest County Fair

Junior Advisory Boards -
Fresh Perspectives





What I Did This Summer - A Visit to the Greenest County Fair on Earth!

By: Marla Calico, CFE

An aerial view of the Marin County Fair showing the 744 photovoltaic panels on the roof of the Exhibit Hall.

It started with an e-mail message. I had sent a message to Jim Farley of the Marin County Fair in San Rafael, Calif., (www.marinfair.org) to let him know about a possible grant opportunity from a local donor, whose intent was to reduce the carbon footprint of the county. Jim kindly thanked me for the information, but wanted to tell me about the plans for the 2008 Marin County Fair, “The Greenest County Fair on Earth.” In short order I was reading about the massive solar array installation on the Exhibit Hall roof, the capital improvements being made to not only conserve energy, but *using* those savings to pay for the improvements, and the other steps the organization was taking to become certified “Green Business” in the county’s program.

In a matter of only weeks, the decision was made that I would visit the 2008 Marin County Fair and witness first-hand all that the fair would implement to become “The Greenest County Fair on Earth.” With this article, we hope to share with you some of the key findings and pique your interest in learning more about how your fair or event or business can “go green.” To find out more, see the box for information on an upcoming CyberSeminar featuring the Marin County Fair.

The process of planning for the 2008 Marin County Fair started more than a year in advance. Farley said that finding a theme that resonates with the citizens of Marin County is imperative and Marinites are “passionate about learning how to reduce their carbon footprint and make green lifestyle choices that

affect our planet.” From that point on, Farley and his team began the arduous process of researching what other county fairs were doing with regard to “greening” and assembling the group of people who would advise and assist in the myriad ways the fair would implement the green concept to its fullest extent.

Key to the process was the commitment of the County of Marin. Charles McGlashan, president of the Board of Supervisors (the leg-

islative and executive body of the county) said that Marin County must do some “very big things” in the coming decade to implement sustainability as the foundation for the countywide plan update (see <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/comdev/advance/Sustainability.cfm>). In comments made on opening day of the Marin County Fair, McGlashan said that the fair is “the biggest event in the county and the *best* way to showcase ‘going green’

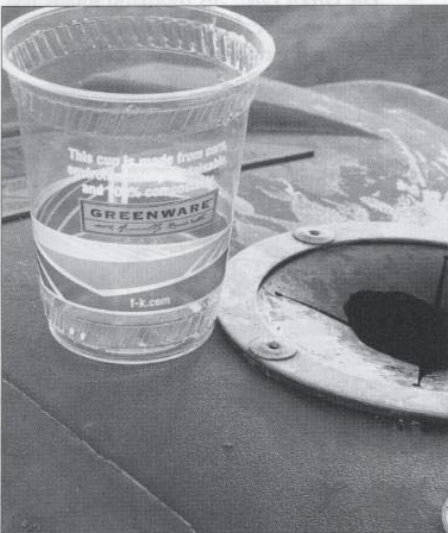
Join us **September 24** at 2:30 p.m. Central for a live CyberSeminar to hear Jim Farley, manager of the Marin County Fair, tell the behind-the-scenes stories and outcomes of their efforts. The CyberSeminar is **free** to all IAFE members — for complete details visit our website at <http://www.fairsandexpos.com/events/cyberseminar.aspx>. And, sign up now for the special 4 hour symposium, “Going Green — Changing our Fair Environment” featured at the 2008 IAFE Convention on December 14.

in a fun and engaging way” to educate the citizens about the issues and the means of achieving the county’s sustainability goals.

The “Greenest County Fair on Earth” meant changes in operations, incorporating “green” themes in entertainment, education, and exhibits all in collaboration and partnership with key players in the county and community. Here’s an overview:

Operations

- **Solar Power:** The solar array installation on the roof of the Marin Center’s Exhibit Hall generates 374,000 kWh per year (enough to power nearly 60 homes per year in California or 40% of the entire annual energy use at the Marin Center complex). The \$1.3 million project was funded through a rebate from the California Construction Authority secured from PG&E’s Self-Generation Incentive program and a 0% interest “Clean Renewable Energy Bond.” **Note:** you can find out more about the California fairs photovoltaic program at the 2008 Convention in a workshop on December 15. A mobile trailer containing a solar array generated electricity to power the sound system and LED lighting for the community performances on the Ben & Jerry’s Stage. This was the first solar-powered stage at a county fair.
- **Energy Efficiency:** A lighting retrofit in the Exhibit Hall and meeting rooms is expected to save \$20,000 per year in energy costs. Replacing 35-year-old HVAC units in the Exhibit Hall will result in \$18,500 savings per year. These improvements were made through a fully funded grant from the California Energy Commission.
- **Water Conservation:** The installation of 23 Sloan Waterfree urinals in the Auditorium and Exhibit Hall men’s restrooms will result



One example of the compostable service ware beverage concessionaires utilized. This cup, shown on top of one of the new recycling containers, is made utilizing a biopolymer derived from corn.



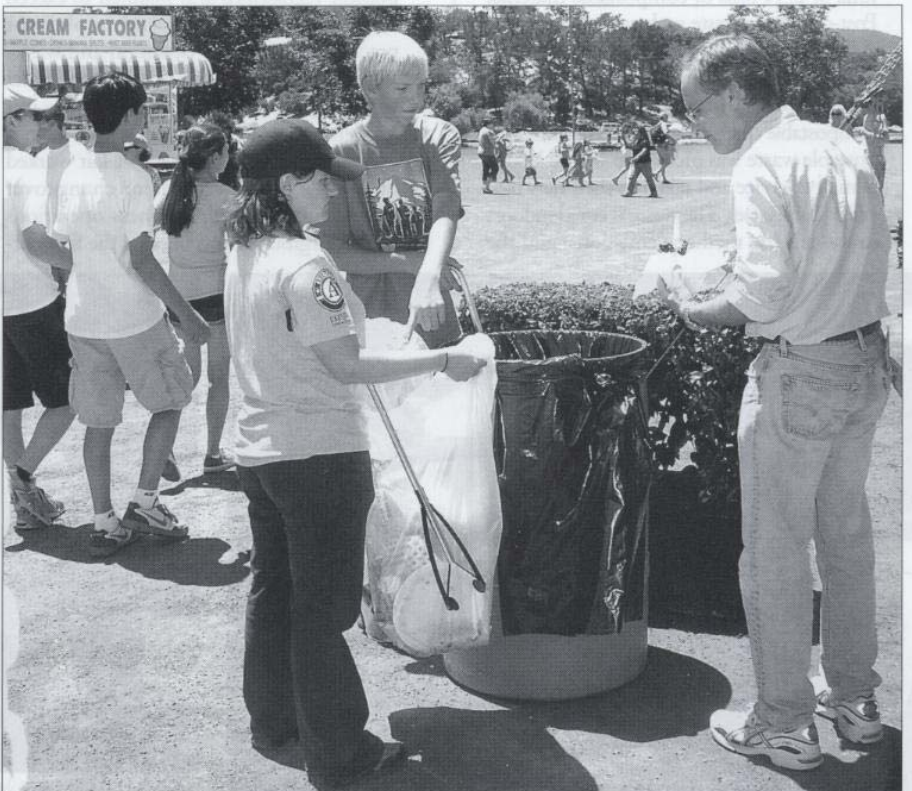
The mobile solar array provided power for sound and light at the Ben & Jerry’s stage and was sponsored by PG&E.

in conserving 920,000 gallons of fresh water each year. Working with the Marin Municipal Water District, all toilet fixtures were converted to the more efficient 1.6-gallon type. Reclaimed water from the Las Gallinas Sanitary District is being used for lawn and landscape irrigation on the fairgrounds and in the new restrooms in the Auditorium and at Lagoon Park. Irrigation controllers linked to weather stations and satellites predicted temperature, wind, soil, and planting conditions to conserve water in irrigating lawns and landscaping. In areas of

the grounds where dust control was needed, the fair teamed up with Brocco and Sons to apply a magnesium chloride dust control product from the salt ponds of San Francisco Bay.

- **Food & Beverage:** Concessionaires used biodegradable or compostable cups, plates, and serving dishes. “Waste diversion” stations were stationed near food courts and dining tents to separate recyclable and compostable materials. One-hundred-eighty gallons of cooking oil were collected from food

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Members of the Marin Conservation Corps help a fair guest make a decision on composting or recycling.

WHAT I DID THIS SUMMER

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vendors by Yokayo Biofuels and it was converted to bio-fuels for use at Yokayo filling stations in Mendocino County. All food concessionaires (including five in Butler Amusements' carnival midway) offered "Healthy Food Choices" as part of their 2008 fair menu. The fair worked with consultant Janice Sitton of Good Green Graces and Terry Vynielo of Play Fair Marin (a unique collaboration of community organizations — learn more at www.playfairmarin.org) to communicate with concessionaires early and often, evaluate the menu items to be noted "Healthy Food Choice," find sources for the service wares, and provide information on the food waste composting operation.

- **Recycling and Composting:** Working with the Marin Conservation Corps (<http://www.marinc.org>), the first local non-profit conservation corps in the United States, the fair set out 50 new recycling containers throughout the grounds to collect plastic, aluminum, and glass containers. The amount of recyclable materials collected tripled from the 2007 to the 2008 fair with nearly two tons collected. Collecting compostable food and beverage waste at the fair and diverting it from the landfill was an operation facilitated by the Marin Sanitary Service. Pre-consumer waste (corn husks, avocado skins, etc.) was collected from food vendors — a total of 2.34 tons of compostable material! Post-consumer waste such as the biodegradable cups and paper plates and leftover food waste was also collected at the stations set up near food service areas and 2.18 tons of compostable material resulted. All this compostable waste was picked up by the Marin Sanitary Service and taken to their new biocell in San Rafael. The waste is cured indoors in the cell (no methane emissions) and the



Members of the Marin Conservation Corps along with on-site consultant Janice Sitton of Good Green Graces (far right) are at one of the recycling/composting stations set near food stands.

resulting compost will be returned to the Marin County Fair for use in landscaping and planter beds.

- **Bike Valet Program:** Teaming up with Marin County Bicycle Coalition, free valet parking for fairgoers riding their bikes to the fair was offered from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day of the fair.

- **"Green Business Program:"** The Marin County Fair pledged to comply with all applicable regulations and planned to exceed compliance; to develop and implement practices that prevent pollution and waste; to conserve energy, water, material and other resources; and to strive for continuous improvement to become a certified Green Business in Marin County. The fair worked for nine months on a major changeover of greening the daily business operations of the fairgrounds and became the first fair-

grounds to be certified as a green business among the 1,300 businesses certified to date in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Education

- **Alt Fuel Road Show:** Unlike a commercial trade show or exhibit featuring alternative fuel vehicles, the Alt Fuel Road Show was a curated event with more than 25 vehicles featured. From the personal Oxygen scooter of Dana Armanino (Marin County Sustainability Team Business Coordinator and organizer of "The Green Life" exhibit at the fair) to the PG&E pre-production fuel cell model car, to the exciting Pi Mobility bicycle, the Alt Fuel expo opened a window for a view of the future of transportation.
- **"The Green Life:"** Six thousand square feet of space in the Exhibit Hall was transformed into an engaging display and exhibit of green



One of the electric cars featured in the Alt Fuel Road Show.



Mike Treacy, director of the Division of Fairs & Expos, California Department of Agriculture visits with Larry Lantzger of Pi Mobility.



A partial view of the "Ultimate Green Home."

lifestyle choices. Organized under the direction of Dana Armanino The Green Life featured:

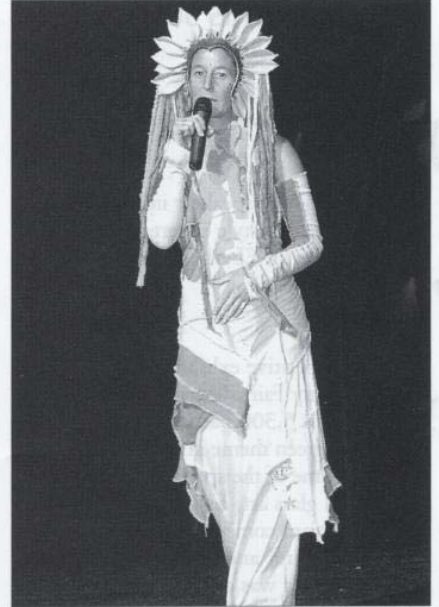
- "The Ultimate Green Home" — a walk through bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and even exterior landscaping
- "Green Talks" — Five daily workshops curated by the Dominican University's "Green MBA" students. *Note: I sat in on "Green Remodeling Basics" and learned a lot about basic principles that could be applied to maintaining and renovating fair facilities in almost any area.*
- "Guerilla Green Environmental Theater" — Short videos produced by middle and high school students highlighted the best "green" practices of Marin County resi-

- dents, businesses, and non-profit groups. You can see the Guerilla Green videos by going to www.marinfair.org and clicking on "Fair News and Video."
- "Marin Carbon Cube" — Fair guests could walk into a structure denoting the volume of a ton of CO₂ and, using a special computer program, calculate their own carbon footprint.
- "The Green Dining Table" — Daily demonstrations paired Chef Eric Gower, author of the *Breakaway Cook*, with growers of the Marin Farmers' Market to showcase the abundance of locally grown food.

- **Wind Power:** The 30 foot tall Mariah Pow-



A crowd gathers to watch Chef Eric Gower and a grower from the Marin Farmers' Market discuss ways to cook fresh locally grown produce.



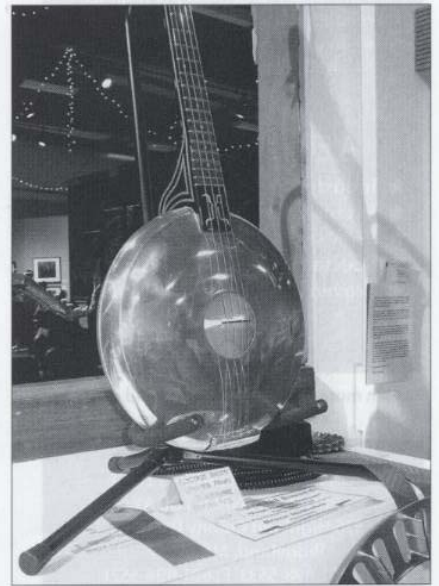
Betty Biodiesel (aka Lindsay Hassett) introduces a speaker.

- er Windspire was located at the front entry gate — the first fairgrounds in California to showcase a wind turbine. On display in The Green Life was a helix-style wind turbine for use in roof-mounted wind energy systems.

Edu-tainment — Entertainment AND Education

- Entertainment with a green theme included:
 - Dr. Solar, a vaudeville player and magician at his solar-powered stage.
 - Walking Tree Man, a "tree stiltwalker"
 - EarthCapades, an environmental education show featuring juggling, music,

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Grand Champion in "From Trash to Treasure" — a banjo made from electric frying pans!

WHAT I DID THIS SUMMER

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- comedy, and audience participation
 - Betty Biodiesel, the Bay Area's favorite Eco MC.
- Special keynote speakers included Danny Seo, a green lifestyle expert and author, as well as Martin Eberhard, founder of the Tesla Roadster.

Exhibits

The competitive exhibits program at the Marin County Fair is extensive (over 11,000 exhibits from 5,300 participants) and highlighted the green theme in every area of competition. Some of the special contests included recycled glass art, design your own water bottle, backyard compost competition, "from trash to treasure" and decorated windows.

Green Street was a special feature of the Marin Marketplace with local green businesses, services and products.

The Marin County Fair did much more than this in their operations, exhibits, education, and entertainment to truly be "the greenest county fair on earth." The results were positive and encouraging. Attendance was similar to 2007 — about 120,000, but record for admission revenue was set with \$1,218,880



A group of artists participate in the opening day's "Plein Air" contest. Two-dozen artists set up early to complete their painting in the 7 hours allotted.

— an increase of 13% over 2007. Food and beverage sales also were record setting with \$1,038,703. The fair garnered extensive and positive media attention throughout its entire run. Farley said that it was "exciting to be able to offer innovative and valuable information to Bay Area residents, and present a truly enjoyable experience at a time when rising gas prices are keeping families close to home."

I count the opportunity to visit the Marin County Fair in 2008 as one my greatest experiences in over three decades of being involved with fairs. To witness the implementation of an innovative theme in the broadest

scope possible, to see first-hand how the community not only responded to the theme but also celebrated and experienced the traditional elements of the county fair and to have the chance to get a tremendous amount of "behind-the-scenes" details on the operations was wonderful! ♦

Marla Calico is the director of grants and special education at the LAFE.



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Fair guests of all ages were mystified by The Walking Tree Man.