

"Going Green": Just Makes Sense

by Julie Crane

"Being Green is easier than you may think" as Resort Manager, Julie Crane explains one resort's journey of easing their footprint on the delicate ecosystem of the Florida Keys.

The Banyan Resort is tranquil oasis located on the tropical island paradise of Key West. This historic resort is comprised of six homes erected in the 1880's during the time when Key West was the richest city per capita in the United States. Three additional homes were added in the late 1980's. In early August 2007, The Banyan Resort was proud to be named the first Timeshare/Condominium Resort in the State of Florida to be designated as a "Certified Florida Green Lodging Facility." The Banyan Resort was not only the first condominium association in Florida to

receive this designation, but it was also the first lodging facility in the entire Florida Keys.

The resort's management first learned of the Green Lodging Program while attending a monthly meeting of the local American Hotel and Lodging Association in April 2007. The entire process of certification took the resort approximately two months.

How-To

The first course of action was to complete a self-evaluation checklist to measure the resort's impact on the environment and highlight areas of potential conservation. Many resorts are able to realize dramatic operating expense reduction in the first month after this evaluation by attacking the "low hanging fruit."

A major component of the process was the development of a "green

team." Including at least one employee from each department is the best way to bring ideas to the table as well as help plan their implementation.

Julie Brown, assistant general manager, points out, "The number of small things that can be done right away once everyone starts 'thinking green' is simply amazing!"

Additionally, there is a great interactive guide available on The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Web site filled with helpful hints for conservation in every department of a lodging facility.

To start, the Banyan had already implemented a number of conservation measures because it was just good economics, so they did not have savings statistics to share. Monitoring utility bills for anomalies; installing solar collector panels for pool heating; installing decking made from recycled plastic lumber; using low flow (for shower heads, toilets, and faucets); monitoring the thermostats in



Top: GREEN Certification Ceremony: 1st Row LtoR: Christina Lindley, GLEE; Greg Sullivan, GM of Waste Management; Laura Comer, Florida DEP; Gus Rios, Florida DEP; Julie Crane, Banyan Resort's GM; Julie Brown, Banyan Resort's Asst. GM; 2nd Row: Representative Ron Saunders, Key West Mayor Morgan McPherson.

Bottom: Banyan Resort main house: the "Delaney House" which was named after William L. Delaney, who erected this majestic residence in 1898. Mr. Delaney was a collector for US Customs and served as first vice-president on the Key West Board of Trade, which was the first commercial body organized in Key West on November 30, 1885. The Delaney House was selected as one of 38 most significant Key West structures by the Milo Smith Survey of Historic Buildings.





Recycle area used by guests and staff

unoccupied guest suites in the morning and evening; using compact fluorescent light bulb; and offering Xeriscaping and guest recycling were just some of the examples of how The Banyan had already been conserving resources. They implemented a recycling program (which includes guest participation), composting biodegradable waste from the resort's Tiki Bar, as well as a linen re-use program, and also began installing carpet squares made from recycled content which is recyclable upon removal.

A major obstacle they had to overcome was the installation of the solar collectors used for swimming pool heating. Ms. Crane reported "Because we are an historic property, the City of Key West's Historical Architectural Review Commission (HARC) challenged whether or not we were altering our historic structures outside of their guidelines. We hired an attorney and eventually prevailed because state regulations provide that no one can be prohibited from installing renewable energy devices."

The final step toward certification involved a site inspection performed by an officer of the DEP. The officer confirmed that required efforts in the following resort areas had been implemented, so as to win the "One Palm" designation: water conservation, wastewater reduction, energy efficiency, solid waste reduction, and hazardous waste reduction.

Green Outlook

Getting certified was not as hard as maintaining the designation as a green lodging facility, as the resort leadership

knows. The resort will be eligible to receive the "Two and Three Palm" designation in successive years, if they continue to demonstrate further enhancements to sustainability. They are currently researching toxin free paint, salt chlorination for their swimming pools, as well as biodegradable cleaning products for both the linens and in unit cleaning. This will remain a challenge and goal for years to come, as The Banyan continually research ways to further reduce the property's impact on its environment.

Having earned this designation, this resort hopes to provide inspiration for other properties to take the initiative to reduce, reuse, and recycle wherever possible. A little effort from everyone goes a long way in preserving our unique environment for the future.

Julie Crane has been in the resort management field for 5 years. She is currently serves as a member of Green Key West ~ A Coalition for Sustainability. Julie Crane is general manager at The Banyan Resort in Key West, Florida. Her e-mail is julie@thebanyanresort.com.

Solar panels, for which we fought so hard to have!



Composter

