

# Festival touts 'green' living

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

**FAYETTEVILLE** — Three enthusiastic bicyclists and sets of solar panels generated the electricity to amplify sound at trailside concerts around Lake Fayetteville on Sunday, proving it's possible to reduce conventional energy consumption, even in unusual circumstances.

ArtoSphere, Walton Arts Center's festival celebrating art and nature, seeks to "green" up the idea of a multi-week regional event through small changes — stocking its concession stands with local produce and beer, giving priority parking to carpool customers, even making banana smoothies with a bicycle-powered device called a "fender blender."

"I think at this point, it's more of a fun way to show different types of energy production," production manager Peter Croken said. "It's a way to get people thinking about it. When you just come in and flip the switch and the lights come on, you don't really think about it."

The festival's theme is in part the result of a growing public focus on green products, businesses and prac-

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**Jesse Adams** of Springdale (above) checks on the power conditioner/power inverter while Stan Sasser (from left) of Fayetteville, Lisa Ostrom of Fayetteville and Monty Mason of Bentonville pedal to provide power for a concert on Sunday during ArtoSphere at North Shore Park at Lake Fayetteville. Adams, head carpenter for Walton Arts Center, assembled the cycling power station. Visitors (right) attend ArtoSphere under rainy conditions.



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# 'Green'

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tices throughout Northwest Arkansas, Croken said.

Artosphere, which aims to be an annual event, falls at the same time the Walton Arts Center pursues Greenway certification through the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce. The locally administered label, one of several used in the region, is given to businesses that agree to energy- and water-saving practices and continuing education for employees.

Drawing momentum from Wal-Mart Stores Inc.'s corporate emphasis, "green" has become an influential marketing moniker in the region, and is often found in advertising for businesses like restaurants, gyms and events.

Proponents of green ratings argue the programs help ensure customers are patronizing businesses that are genuinely striving to reduce their environmental impact, rather than "greenwashing," or using misleading claims of sustainable practices to attract customers.

The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce partners with Green Plus, a national organization that allows businesses to earn green ratings through a self-administered assessment. The program has attracted five participants.

The Fayetteville chamber created its Greenway certification using a ratings scale created by the University of Arkansas Applied Sustainability Center. Students from the UA Students in Free Enterprise team give a baseline assessment of a business' water and electricity use and employee policies, creating recommendations for improvement. The business maintains the certification by committing to continuing



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Rana Santacruz of New York City plays the accordion Sunday with his band during Artosphere at North Shore Park at Lake Fayetteville. Power for the concert was generated by three cyclists on stationary bikes in the background.

the plan.

"Green is a hot topic now," said Curtis Northcutt, who administers the Greenway program for the Fayetteville chamber. "But it needs to be an authentic behavioral shift."

The Fayetteville system, introduced as a pilot project earlier this year, ensures "validity" by having a third party assess businesses, he said. Businesses also submit their energy and water bills to document a real savings over time. There are fewer than a dozen businesses participating, but members continue to join.

Supporters of the effort hope to beef up their bottom lines by attracting more cus-

tomers, Northcutt said.

"That's really our end goal," he said.

The Greenwashing Index, a project of the University of Oregon advertising department and EnviroMedia, a social media firm, ranks the authenticity of advertising and businesses claiming "green" benefits on a scale of one to five, with five being bogus and one being authentic.

"It's greenwashing when a company or organization spends more time and money claiming to be 'green' through advertising and marketing than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact," according to the group's website, [greenwashingindex.com](#).

"It's whitewashing, but with a green brush."

A survey conducted by the site found that 70 percent of customers still consider green claims in their purchasing decisions despite poor economic conditions, said Valerie Davis, CEO and co-founder of EnviroMedia, which creates government campaigns on health-related issues like smoking and pollution.

So-called green practices are often good business,

Davis said. Using fewer resources saves money, and the marketing campaigns attract customers.

The site's users criticized a water bottle ad that claims a reduction in plastic was an environmental effort, not a financial one. They praised the use of recyclable vinyl on billboards by Clear Channel Communications.

Northcutt said customers are getting more savvy, making rating scales necessary. He declined to provide a copy