

BUSINESS

Companies tout green initiatives during tours



REBECCA MCKINSEY/DAILY TIMES HERALD

Derek Sadler, with West Des Moines solar company Current Renewable Efficiencies (left), and Todd Partridge, vice president of the Movelt companies in Breda, discuss the solar panels that help power the office building there.

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At Movelt in Breda, solar panels help power the building — and the cabinets inside are made from crushed sunflower hulls rather than wood.

At McFarland Clinic, extra insulation and specialty windows help regulate the building's temperature and utility use, while the home of a New Opportunities client in Carroll saw recent improvements that will help its residents save on energy bills this winter.

Those were among the many energy-saving and environmentally friendly initiatives several local businesses shared with local legislative candidates and state environmental leaders recently.

The Iowa Environmental Council hosted a tour of Carroll-area businesses with lawmakers and candidates on Sept. 28.

State Rep. Brian Best, a Glidden Republican, and his challenger Peter Leo, a Manning Democrat, joined the tour, which featured McFarland Clinic, New Opportunities and the Iowa Community Action Association, and Movelt. Here's what they learned:

McFarland Clinic

A variety of initiatives help McFarland Clinic save energy, both in Carroll and Ames.

Geothermal wells reduce the facility's electrical usage. Additional wall foam and insulation, including on the roofs, reduce heat loss in the winter,

keep heat out in the summer and help keep the facility airtight. Double-paned, tinted glass windows filled with argon gas increase efficiency and help with temperature control.

Automated facility management keeps the building's facilities efficient, helps with monitoring and reduces use when no one is there.

"It's like having an employee on-site 24/7," said Ron Frantzen, executive director of facilities management at all of McFarland's locations. "When you go home and go to sleep, the facility goes to sleep, too."

In Ames, solar panels on the facility's roof help power the McFarland

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McFarland Clinic has tinted windows filled with argon gas to make the building more efficient.

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Clinic there.

"On a hot day, we're producing and saving money right and left," Frantzen said.

As technology improves and energy standards raise, companies' standards increase as well. "What was the low-hanging fruit — now that's the bare minimum," he said.

Energy rebates help offset the cost energy-saving initiatives, including when new opportunities are identified, Frantzen said. He added that energy efficiency is a solid business move.

"You're never done in energy efficiency," he said. "It's an evolution. It keeps going. Just because you win one, you're not done. There's more opportunities out there."

New Opportunities/Iowa Community Action Association

New Opportunities works with The Iowa Community Action Association to help eligible clients weatherize their homes.

The Iowa Community Action Association, a combined 17 agencies that serve the entire state, "is committed

to serve the best interests of the poor, thereby serving the best interests of all people,"

according to information from the organization.

One of its programs is weatherization assistance for low-income Iowa residents, including some associated with New Opportunities.

Of those assisted through the Iowa Weatherization Program, many are elderly, have young children or have a disability, said Mike Berg, weatherization director with New Opportunities.

To qualify, clients need to receive Supplemental Security Income or Family Investment Program Assistance or have an income that is at or below 200 percent of the poverty level.

In 2016, the average savings per home involved with the program was \$262 a year. In 2017, almost 1,500 homes across the state were weatherized through the program. That included about 60 in the seven-county area New Opportunities services. In Carroll County, from six to 10 homes typically benefit from the program each year.

Participants in the tour visited the Carroll home of one of those clients, seeing firsthand how insulation and other improvements ultimately will reduce the house's energy bills and make the home more safe.

Common improvements include replacing

heating systems, water heaters and refrigerators, insulating walls and attics, sealing up basements and crawl spaces, improving lighting and more. Almost every home receives "infiltration reduction" improvements — reducing the amount of outside air that enters the home. When needed, smoke or carbon monoxide detectors are installed.

On average, the program provides about \$10,000 worth of improvements to a home.

"Families say, 'It's so much more comfortable — I don't have to worry about the furnace breaking over and over and using my little bit of money to fix it,'" said Lana Shope, executive director of Iowa Community Action Association.

MoveIt

The office building that houses this specialized moving and logistics company in Breda was built with efficiency in mind, company leaders told those on the tour.

The building has a daylight dimming system that adjusts the lights' brightness as the sunlight shifts, geothermal heating and cooling and more. Renewable and recycled materials were used throughout, with sunflower-hull cabinets, tiles made from recycled milk jugs, entrance mats made from recycled airplane tire rubber and more.

The building was crafted with efficiency in mind, MoveIt CFO Liz Partridge Blessington said.

A portion of the building's power comes from solar panels set up outside. A computer system allows MoveIt's employees to track the energy the panels generate.

Even on a cloudy day, like the day of the tour, the panels were producing at about 20 percent, MoveIt Vice President Todd Partridge said.

Not only does that help with utility costs, but it's a draw for customers — particularly larger clients around the country looking for a moving and logistics company that saves energy and pays attention to the environment.

"The kids that are graduating college now, they ask (about environmental initiatives)," said Derek Sadler, who works with Current Renewable Efficiencies, the company that installed the solar panels. "It's important to them."

MoveIt works with several large companies, including Gatorade — in fact, the company has delivered Gatorade to Michael Jordan's house, Partridge said. It also helps transport Apple servers and has worked in Hong Kong, London and a variety of other locations.

Years ago, the company had the first fax machine in Breda, he said. Now, it has the city's first solar panels.

"Solar is a nice fit with us — we always try to be cutting-edge," Partridge said.

The company has come a long way, and keeping its operations green is just one part of that, said MoveIt President D.G. Partridge.

"I started in a little bit of building up on Main Street and got one secretary, then two, and now here we are," he said.



Ron Frantzen



Mike Berg



Lana Shope