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Sarasota County names local charity 'Green Business Partner'

Sarasota County's Green Business Partnership has awarded its newest certification to the largest community foundation in Florida. With assets of \$260 million, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice has provided \$72 million in grants in the areas of arts and culture, health and human services, education, civic affairs and the environment.

"We wanted to walk the walk," says Teri Hansen, President and CEO of the foundation. "The foundation encourages nonprofit organizations to build green, and we support environmental conservation and education through our grants. We realized that if we are going to counsel our nonprofit partners to be more sustainable, we should look at our own business and ensure that we are doing everything we can to reduce our impact on the environment."

According to Sarasota County Recycling Coordinator Tom Franklin, the foundation's efforts are already paying off. "During their application process, they determined they could purchase more than 72,000 kilowatts of green energy through Florida Power and Light's Sunshine Energy for Businesses program," said Franklin. "It was a very proactive move and just a part of what the foundation is doing in a number of areas."

Hansen has appointed a "green team" to conduct an environmental audit of their office, research best practices and make recommendations to the rest of the staff. "Efforts like the Green Business Partnership raise awareness and offer a practical roadmap that businesses can follow to make real changes," Hansen added. "When other companies see the growing range of businesses that have been certified, hopefully they will realize, 'Hey, we can do this, too.'"

The Green Business Partnership was initiated under a Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant and is open to all businesses in Sarasota County that implement required resource conservation measures and pass an on-site certification assessment. Each certified business receives a Green Business Partnership certificate and seal they can display to demonstrate their commitment to a healthy environment. They also receive an electronic logo that can be used on company stationary and promotional items.

The Gulf Coast Community Foundation is now listed in a Green Business Partnership directory that is available online at the Green Business Web site, www.scgov.net/greenbusiness.

The Green Business Partnership is actively seeking other participants. For more information or to request a Green Business Partnership packet, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask to speak with the county's Recycling Coordinator.

For more information on the businesses currently certified under the program, visit <http://greenbusiness.scgov.net> and click on the link entitled, "Participating Businesses."