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Media contact: Pat Haire, 941-861-5104; cell 941-650-2850; phaire@scgov.net

Project contacts: Tom Franklin, 941-861-6274; cell 941-232-6761; twfrankl@scgov.net;
John Arico, Zest! of Sarasota, 941-924-2535

Green Business Partnership gets a little 'Zest! of Sarasota'

Sarasota County has awarded its newest Green Business partnership to Zest! of Sarasota, a family-owned business that's taking the trash out of food preparation. The company, which is located at 6584 Superior Ave., Sarasota, has honed environmentally friendly catering into high art for parties large and small by finding inventive ways to minimize waste.

"We are unique among caterers, even though what we do is very basic," said company owner John Arico, who worked in catering for a number of years before starting his own business. "It was always disappointing to me to see all the cans and bottles emptied at an event get thrown into the trash."

Zest! separates garbage into plastic bags, cans and bottles, foam containers and organic matter. "The plastic bags and foam containers go to the recycle bins at Publix," said Arico. "Cans and bottles and cardboard get picked up by a commercial service. Organic matter goes into our compost bin and eventually winds up in our garden, where we grow some of the items we use in our businesses."

Arico says that unlike other caterers, Zest! does not provide bottled water, opting instead for spring water from pitchers. "We do not serve things like Chilean sea bass, as it has been over-fished," Arico added. "We use Fair Trade coffee. We make available biodegradable plates and cups, but prefer to use china and glass, which we provide at no extra cost for parties up to 20 guests."

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 it can display to demonstrate its commitment to a healthy environment. The business also receives an electronic logo that can be used on company stationary and promotional items.

Zest! of Sarasota 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.

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

Media note: A JPEG image of the Green Business Partnership logo is attached.

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