



JIM STEVENS/STAFF PHOTOS

DAVID WALKER, above, uses a special scoop on his forklift to gather hay and horse manure from stables at the Alameda County Fair in Pleasanton on Tuesday for loading into a transport truck. He delivers the materials to a mushroom farm in Morgan Hill. Ricky Sosa, left, separates cardboard from trash for so it can be recycled.

Organizers hope fair visitors 'go green'

■ Green Village highlights Alameda County's effort to promote sustainability

By Robert Jordan
STAFF WRITER

PLEASANTON — Courtney Townsend hopes visitors leave this year's Alameda County Fair feeling green.

A consultant for the Alameda County Fairgrounds, Townsend coordinated the fair's first Living Green Village. The village is part of the Living Green Program that will be open the first three days of the fair, beginning Friday. Fairgoers can learn about living green, re-

cycling, natural foods, household cleaning information, green baby products and energy conservation.

The goal is for visitors to leave knowing that living green isn't just recycling. It's also about reusing, managing waste and alternate forms of energy. To help visitors learn about green practices, the Green Village will feature 20 green-oriented vendors and activities and speakers designed for children and adults. Representatives from everything from the Foothill Worm Ranch to Cross Town Carpet Care to ZipCar will be in attendance.

"We have quietly been doing this behind the scenes," said Townsend about the fairground's own green practices. "We speak to so many

fairgoers that come year after year, and this will help nudge them on the same program."

The fairgrounds has been green for at least the past 10 years, said Ed Johnson, the fairgrounds maintenance manager.

The Alameda County Fair has won industry awards for its green efforts.

In 2003, solar panels were installed at the fairgrounds that produce one megawatt of electricity, enough energy to power 1,000 homes. The fairgrounds also recycles an estimated 9,600 tons of manure and hay each year from its horse stables. It is sent to mushroom farms in Morgan Hill.

Leaves from the 2,000 trees on

the 248-acre lot the fairgrounds occupies are recycled in a compost heap on the west end of the facility, and all cardboard material, loose asphalt, tires, batteries, oil and grease are also recycled.

"We first did it for practical reasons," Johnson said. "We never kept track of it, but now it just makes sense."

Fair organizers also hope to extend their green methods beyond the three days of the Living Green Village by recycling 100 percent of recyclable material from the 17-day event that attracted more than 400,000 visitors last year. Organizers had similar goals last year and managed to recycle 50 percent.

To accomplish this year's goal,

five different recycling areas have been set up for fairgoers to recycle. The food court area will also have workers there to help people recycle plastic, paper and food waste.

"We love our participants and we never say, 'This is the way you must do things,'" Townsend said. "But county fairs have involved a certain amount of education through agriculture and that sort of thing. We just want to say these are some great things to do and they are easy."

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