



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Green Business Made Easy with GLEE Certification Program

Green Living & Energy Education (GLEE) is taking its mission to educate and promote sustainability to a new level with the launch of a Keys-wide Green Business Certification Program. The program, which launches Nov. 1, is the first of its kind to address lessening the environmental impact of small businesses in the Florida Keys.

“The Green Business Program is our response to the many requests we’ve received over the years from those who want to green their business operations but don’t know where to begin,” said GLEE President Alison Higgins. “We’re offering a simple template that will help reduce waste and conserve resources, while trimming the cost of doing business.”

Offered through the KeysGLEE.com website in the form of downloadable tools, the program provides an easy to follow, step-by-step, DIY greening process. Once the required measures have been implemented, an on-site assessment is conducted. If all standards are met, the business becomes certified, a recognition that includes several rewards and incentives designed to inspire businesses to “get with the program.”

A pilot for the program was launched in May. Monroe Association for ReMARCable Citizens (MARC) staff at the May Sands School used the tools to implement green initiatives and become certified. The facility houses classrooms, offices, a nursery operation, a plant store and a restaurant. The Lower Keys Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center has also become certified, with staff and directors working together to implement best management practices.

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Certified Green Business Partners receive a printed certification, as well as a window decal and electronic logo that identifies them as a certified Green Business Partner to customers and the community. GLEE is committed to issuing press announcements and photos of each new partner and encourages businesses to promote their certification as a marketing tool. Certified businesses will also be listed in GLEE's Online Green Business Directory, which will serve as a valuable resource for visitors and residents looking for earth-friendly businesses, products and services.

"While most other markets are suffering in this economy, the green consumer market is a growing one," said McDonald. "People want to support eco-friendly business, and by making the Green Business Directory available on the GLEE website, anyone can use it. The beauty of the online directory is that we can update it daily, with no reprints or loss of trees required," said McDonald.

Green Business Partners will also have first option for ad placement on the new GLEE website, while an online Green Forum will provide opportunity for networking and information sharing on many levels.

The Green Business Program tools provided on the KeysGLEE.com website are available to any business at no charge. To become GLEE certified, there is a \$50 on-site assessment fee for GLEE Business Members, and a \$150 fee for non-members, which includes a one-year GLEE Business Membership.

The launch of the Green Business Program coincides with steps local government is taking to address climate change and sea level rise, and will complement programs such as the Climate Action Plan adopted by the Key West City Commission last week.

"As major sponsors of EcoWeek 2010, we are encouraging businesses throughout the Keys to get with the program by next November," said McDonald. "Once that begins to happen, the Florida Keys can celebrate being an international eco-tourism destination that understands the value of environmental stewardship."

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