

Hotel's green practices generate greenbacks

Interest grows as TMI promotes its environment-friendly programs

By **MONIKA GUENDNER**

Of the Record staff

When Thea Leonard and Andy Beerman included more environmentally-friendly practices in the running of the Treasure Mountain Inn condominium hotel, they weren't trying to save more money, make more money or gain more business.

But it doesn't hurt that those three things happened anyway.

The couple, who own about a quarter of the entire project and the lodging company that assists with room rentals, made a commitment to environmentally-friendly practices years ago. When they bought out family partners, however, they increased their efforts to align the management of the business with their personal values.

Their practices have put them in a small but growing group of meetings and conventions properties across the country that are going green.

"I'm seeing it a lot in trades (trade magazines), and consistently where it's being featured in more and more stories. The trade publications understand it's a hot topic and something meeting planners are interested in," said Courtney Stern, meetings and conventions sales and marketing manager at the Park City Chamber/Bureau.

Some properties in Park City offer the option of keeping towels and bed sheets for more than one day, but Treasure Mountain Inn has gone further.

Leonard and Beerman offer guests the option of changing their towels each day, but they are not given the same option with sheets. New sheets every day is wasteful and just a vanity issue, said Leonard.

The couple bought into renewable energy as soon as it became available in the area, giving incentives to other owners who also signed up. Today, between 10 and 15 percent of the entire property's energy use is purchased through the Blue Sky program.

Recycling receptacles are present both in common areas and within each of the rooms to encourage guests to participate in the hotel's extensive recycling program. The small toiletries are biodegradable, therefore earth friendly, and contained in recycled plastics. Part of the conversation with potential guests is to dissuade the use



SCOTT SINE/PARK RECORD

Andy Beerman and Thea Leonard applied their values to running the Treasure Mountain Inn - the savings were a perk.

of cars in favor of walking and taking public transportation.

The largest difference has been in the reuse of the structure itself. TMI has undergone extensive renovation over the past few years and Leonard and Beerman were determined to reuse as much of the trim, cabinets, counters and hardware as possible, sometimes sanding through 40 years' worth of paint layers.

This has often been against the well-meaning advice of others, who have told the couple to demolish and start again.

"The building tends to not thrive when it's not being cared for. It's a metaphor for the Earth; you can't just trash the earth and then get rid of it. It's not going to be an architectural gem, but it's a solid building," said Leonard.

The strides they have made have shown themselves to be economical. By washing fewer sheets and towels, TMI saves on water use. The hotel's extensive recycling

efforts have cut down the volume of trash so drastically, the hotel needs fewer trash pick ups. By shifting communications to their staff as well as unit owners and guests, and reusing each sheet, they have been able to reduce their paper use by half.

"We're even retraining ourselves to interact with the computer the same way we interact with paper and pencil," said Beerman. In other words, reading documents off the monitor instead of a print out.

Reducing paper use was one of the most challenging changes. The hotel and rental industry's system is set up so that people expect to have extensive paper documentation for the smallest detail.

"It's thorough to a fault," said Leonard.

Converting files to a digital format and eliminating the paper version allowed the hotel to keep records without needing rooms of physical space. Again, they used incentives to help convert people to these new practices.

Buying recycled products has also helped them save money in some supplies and replacing the sliding glass doors of each unit - some of which dated back to the 1960s construction - with Low E doors, the hotel is able to retain more heat in the winter.

Education, education, education

It's one thing to have programs and recycling bins available, it's another to have your transient guests take advantage of them.

Both Beerman and Leonard have seen guests come to Park City for meetings and never ski, hike or take advantage of the other recreational opportunities here. They have seen aluminum cans thrown into the trash even though the recycling bin stood inches away.

Instead of getting discouraged, they are planning a new program for the hotel that will create a visual cue to guests around conservation and recycling opportunities.

Please see **Hotel, A-13**

Hotel to teach the 'Four Rs' to winter guests

• Continued from A-11

Adopting the hotel's acronym, the program is named Trying to Minimize our Impact, and it's focus will be to educate guests in a "fun and lighthearted" way on the four Rs - recycle, reduce, reuse and recreate, said Leonard.

It is both Leonard and Beerman's hope that as they further discuss their initiatives in the hotel and continue to expand upon them, that they can become role models for other properties and companies as well.

Does it work?

Despite the interest in trade publications, the demand for environmentally-friendly lodging is still relatively quiet.

"At this point, it's an added benefit, and it strikes some planners," said Stern.

She added that she is promoting Park City-area green properties, including the Treasure Mountain Inn, because she has not seen much on other resort towns and "this could set us apart."

Beerman also sees it more as a perk to visitors and meeting planners than a real draw. The location of the hotel at the top of Main Street is still the biggest asset for the property, and one that meeting attendees consistently take advan-

tage of by shopping, dining or just walking through Old Town, he said.

In fact, the biggest change in the hotel's practices lately is that Beerman and Leonard began talking about what they do and discovered that there was a marketing benefit to their actions.

There is an emerging market of people interested in staying in places where the operations are better for the Earth, the employees and the clients.

TMI has already used special incentives to seek out that market. They have worked with several groups, donating a portion of their meeting costs to a non-profit with similar values as the meeting attendees. They have also built alliances with local environmental organizations and donated room use for their meetings.

So far, however, "we've been underutilized," said Beerman.

The couple is currently moving that commitment up another notch, and formalizing an agreement with "1% For The Planet," where they will pledge to consistently donate a portion of their profits to certain non-profit organizations.

And although they are planning this to express their own values, there's no telling whether that move may help promote and sustain the hotel as well.

Ways hotels can go 'green'

Treasure Mountain Inn, Park City's only Green Hotel Association member, employs several practices to help the environment, often finding these measures save them time and money in the long run. Some examples include:

- Recycling bins in each room and in the hallways for paper, glass, plastic, aluminum, tin cans, newspaper and cardboard.
- Guests are encouraged to reuse towels and sheets are not changed daily. Shower heads also use low water.
- TMI places biodegradable shampoos, lotions and soaps made with natural ingredients and packaged in recyclable containers.
- TMI committed approximately 15 percent of its energy usage to support Utah Power's Blue Sky program promoting wind power and renewable energy.
- Encouraging guests to forego cars in favor of walking and public transportation is a staple of their dialog with incoming guests.
- Common-area lighting has been changed to low-energy fluorescent lights.
- TMI's refurbishing has reused and preserved original building materials.
- In-house catering uses a significant amount of organic foods and sustainable seafood; endangered fish is never served.
- With an emphasis on electronic documents, on-line banking and changes to how paper is viewed, paper consumption at TMI has gone down more than 50 percent.
- TMI donates to and helps the fundraising efforts of environmental charities.
- Organic soaps in dispensers have replaced individually packaged soaps.

By the winter season, TMI also plans to include recycled toilet paper and paper towels, offer organic coffee in the rooms purchase effective bio-friendly cleaning supplies and expand their contributions to environmental charities.