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TOWN OF PARADISE VALLEY INDEPENDENT

AT HOME IN PARADISE

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feature

FROM THE GROUND UP:

Resident takes lead in green homebuilding

By Aaron Schrank
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From automakers to clothing brands, it seems almost every company is trying to paint itself green.

Businesses are using the green label to appeal to the growing population of earth-conscious consumers, those who are often willing to shell out a few extra bucks for an eco-friendly product. The ubiquity of the green movement can be overwhelming, but its principles are nonetheless important.

Paradise Valley resident David Grounds, founder of Dorn Homes, has integrated eco-friendly business practices into homebuilding, not as a gimmick, but for all the right reasons.

Mr. Grounds is leading the way in establishing new standards for building healthy, energy-efficient homes. He is launching one of the largest solar-powered residential development initiatives Arizona has ever seen in Tucson, Green Valley and Tubac. The homes will cut energy consumption radically, saving owners in utility bills and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"These technologies are affordable and are going to help our residents save a lot of money, and they help our country become a lot less dependent on foreign energy," Mr. Grounds said.

It is important for those who value a green lifestyle to realize the home is a vital part of the picture. Where and how you live is just as important as what you drive.

"A lot of people don't realize that running a home puts off twice as much greenhouse gas emissions as a car does," Mr. Grounds said. "The public has so much interest in hybrid cars and fuel economy, but running a home is twice the emissions."

A solar-smart home is an American model-built home re-engineered to use modern technology to improve energy efficiency.



Submitted photos/Cullen Creative

Dave Grounds shows off the solar technology atop a Dorn Home.

These homes boast a long list of energy saving features, from compact fluorescent lighting to a solar photovoltaic power generator, a mini-power plant on the roof that runs between 60 and 70 percent of a home's energy use. Mr. Grounds is particularly proud of the fact the insulation system carries to the roofline of the home, so that duct work is inside a heated and cooled space.

"That one move alone saves 25 percent on a heating and cooling bill," Mr. Grounds said. "Between 60 and 65 percent of energy usage on a home comes from heating and cooling; that's why we attacked that one first."

The homes come equipped with solar-powered water heaters, recycled-cellulose insulation in the walls, water-conserving toilets and faucets, high-efficiency appliances and low-emissivity windows. If the technology is there, Mr. Grounds utilizes it.

Mr. Grounds, who lives with his wife Ellen and three children in Paradise Valley, is a family man at heart. He and his family love living

in the Phoenix-metropolitan area, where Mr. Grounds grew up.

"I have a very tight little family unit; that is my No. 1 focus in life," Mr. Grounds said. "I'm passionate about what I do for a career, but at the end of the day, it's all about my family."

Mr. Grounds describes his family as "outdoorsy;" their hobbies as a family include rock climbing and traveling. Helping the less fortunate, he says, gives his family purpose in life. He is enjoying parenthood, as his children are all exploring passions and hobbies of their own.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, and Mr. Grounds is proud to say his children are passionate when it comes to living green. The Grounds children, Adam, 14, Nick, 12, and Ally, 9, all attend Phoenix Country Day School in Paradise Valley.

"PCDS is a very green school," Mr. Grounds said. "The kids already come home walking the talk, so to speak, on being green. My little daughter has a rule you have to recycle or you can't enter

her room."

Dorn Homes has a successful 35-year track record and a reputation for developing one-of-a-kind niche communities. They have been building energy-efficient homes for 12 years, taking advantage of new technologies. Now, with the incentives from utility companies, Dorn Homes has made solar the standard on all its homes.

The reputation of this luxury homebuilder is growing, as Dorn continues to receive awards and recognitions. Dorn Homes is the only Arizona new homebuilder to be recognized as southern Arizona's No. 1 custom homebuilder of the year for four consecutive years.

Mr. Grounds enjoys working for the good of the environment. This green pioneer offers consumers the chance to save money and, ultimately, save the planet.

"With what's happening in the world right now, I think everyone is pretty knowledgeable about environmental change," Mr. Grounds said. "It's fun to be able to do something in life where it feels like you are doing your part to help."