

Fair showcases efforts for greener campus

University organizations discuss sustainable food, reducing chemical waste

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Published: Friday, March 4, 2011



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President of Engineers for a Sustainable World Zachary Wilhoit discusses the importance of solar power to people at the 2011 Sustainability Fair.

Students and staff showed off their green expertise at the second annual Sustainability Fair on Thursday.

About 12 organizations, including the Department of Housing and Food Service, showcased different programs to demonstrate how UT is moving forward with environmental initiatives.

DHFS presented its commitment to environmentally friendly cleaning, which includes the use of Green Seal certification cleaning chemicals and microfiber mops and rags, which are more absorbent.

The greener cleaning practices have reduced water use by 80 percent and required less frequent mop and rag replacement, said DHFS environmental specialist Meagan Jones said.

DHFS also presented its new sustainable food program, which has provided organic food for the Kinsolving Dining Center on Saturday nights since June 2010. The department also maintains three

organic food plots at the UT Community Garden, and representatives said they hope to begin an organic food plot at Jester Center.

“We’re just excited about getting the program started,” said Scott Meyer, DHFS associate director. “Part of our mission is to educate the students about the project, and that’s what we’re excited about.”

While DHFS described its contribution to student living, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety presented its plan to promote responsible laboratory maintenance.

They are promoting safer chemical disposal through a program called Green Laboratory Practices, said Carin Peterson, office training and outreach coordinator. The program is trying to get 30 campus labs involved by May 6, she said.

“We’re trying to reduce our hazardous chemical waste stream,” Peterson said. “The labs involved are helping us out. It is our main initiative at the moment.”

Students groups, such as the Engineers for a Sustainable World, put their own spin on sustainability at the fair. The organization showcased its recycling initiatives and a program that would allow the University to reuse rainwater, such as watering the UT Community Garden.

While UT already has a recycling program, the campus is not recycling enough glass, said Daniel Huang, a chemical engineering freshman who represents the group in the Student Engineering Council.

“You see paper, you see plastic, you see compost, but you don’t see glass,” Huang said.

Electrical engineering sophomore Richard Edwards, the council’s vice president of membership, said sustainability is an important facet of all academic disciplines.

“Sustainability is not just an engineering thing but a universal thing,” Edwards said. “Sustainability would be encompassed in all majors because it applies to everybody.”
