

## Plain Green Conference and Marketplace encourages sustainable thinking

By Janna Farley and Jay Kirschenmann

Families sometimes live smaller by deciding kids don't need to be signed up for dozens of activities. It helps families spend more time together, experts say.

But another way to live smaller is by consuming less and using environmentally friendly products and construction methods.

Find out how to live green from authors and speakers at the Orpheum Theater on Friday during the annual Plain Green Conference and Marketplace.

It's the fourth year that hundreds of attendees will connect with each other to learn about sustainability and listen to nearly 20 speakers during the daylong event.

There will be dozens of green exhibitors on hand, plus workshops and breakout sessions.

"People are hungry for a message that they can make a difference," says author and architect Sarah Susanka, one of the keynote speakers at the conference.

Susanka has written nine best-selling books, including "The Not So Big House," "The Not So Big Life," "Not So Big Remodeling" and, most recently, the 2010 "More Not So Big Solutions for Your Home."

"It doesn't require that they understand the whole picture in order to make a difference," Susanka said by phone from her house in Raleigh, N.C. "When we look at the state of the world and what needs to be accomplished in order to make it more sustainable, it seems overwhelming - so many things seem out of balance."

The message she hopes people take away is that anyone can start small, with their own life, making little changes that ultimately will affect the bigger environmental picture.

Her talk during the conference is called

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"Not So Big: The First Step in Sustainability."

The conference is a project of the Sioux Falls Green Project. For the past three years, it was held at the Washington Pavilion.

This year, organizers are trying the Orpheum Theater, said Angela McKillip, a Sioux Falls architect and interior designer who has served on the planning committee since the conference started.

Last year, about 250 people attended, but about 100 more are expected this year, she said.

"Whether it's your house or your business, there are lots of choices to be made - being sustainable is not just about recycling," McKillip said.

"What's going on in our industry for the past decade circles around sustainable design, so it's an easy stretch for me to think about ways to bring that knowledge into our community and help shape our community in a better way," she said.

Beyond the annual conference, organizers are considering an ongoing lecture series to keep the buzz and excitement generated during the event going throughout the year.

"We're definitely seeing the ball rolling with this city making great strides, but we still have a long way to go," McKillip said.

Among the 20 speakers at the Plain Green conference are two other keynote speakers, besides Susanka.

Alex Steffen is one of the world's leading voices on sustainability, social innovation and concern for the future of Earth. He is a writer, public speaker and strategic consultant known as a leading "green futurist" and a pioneering thinker on global sustainability.

Many of the regions leading the global race for sustainable prosperity have formally adopted Steffen's concepts, from the city of Vancouver in British Columbia to the nation of Denmark.

Another keynote speaker is Gail Vittori, co-director of the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, a nonprofit design firm started in Austin, Texas, in 1975. It is dedicated to sustainable planning and design.

Examples of Vittori's work include her collaboration on the development of the American Society of Healthcare Engineering's Green Healthcare Construction Guidance Statement, and the Green Guide for Health Care, a project of

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Reach reporter Jay Kirschenmann at 331-2312.

## If you go

What: Plain Green Conference 2011

When: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday

Where: Orpheum Theater, 315 N. Phillips Ave.

Cost: \$95 for a full-access pass if purchased by Thursday, \$30 student pass, \$50 to single keynote programs or parties

See the full schedule and register online at [plaingreen.org](http://plaingreen.org)

## More green

An event not affiliated with the Plain Green Conference is the Green Living Health Expo, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 22-23 at the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds.

Admission is \$5, free for those 17 and younger. The family-friendly event showcases new wellness and sustainability products and services offered by area business leaders, agencies and innovators.

For information, contact Midwest Green Events at 888-740-6991 or see [www.greenlivinghealthexpo.com](http://www.greenlivinghealthexpo.com).

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