



## Awards reward sustainable businesses and agencies

By Nancy Isles Nation

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Ken and Amanda Eichstaedt work in the greenhouse at their bed and breakfast, the Bear Valley Inn in Olema. (Photo/Alan Den)

When Amanda and Ken Eichstaedt bought the Bear Valley Inn in Olema in 2004, they thought they would be absentee owners and get someone else to operate the business.

But Amanda realized that operating a bed and breakfast required someone who really cared, so she ended up running it herself and transforming it into a sustainable enterprise that became a Marin green business in 2007.

The Eichstaedts are among six businesses and organizations that will be honored with an award for excellence from the Marin Economic Commission at a lunch this month.

The awards recognize those businesses, community

organizations, government agencies and individuals who contribute to a vibrant and sustainable Marin economy.

Amanda, a master gardener, beekeeper and bicycling advocate, had worked in retail and government for nearly two decades before she and her husband took over the inn.

Ken, 46, continued at his job as a civil engineer in San Francisco, riding his bicycle to the ferry daily, while Amanda found herself increasingly involved at the inn - and striving to reduce its impact on the environment. She started using the least toxic cleaners she could find and began to re-use and recycle whatever she could.

Now, the Eichstaedts compost waste that is used in the gardens, they raise chickens that lay eggs for guests' breakfasts and buy Straus's milk in bottles that are returned to be refilled.

Fences are made from recycled redwood and furniture comes from a store that specializes in reused wood. Walkways are paved with vintage brick.

Amanda, 42, said guests are awed by the sustainability factor and often head home determined to change their own habits.

"You just get hooked on the old-school way of doing things," Amanda said. "It can be overwhelming to think about the state of the universe right now, and doing things is a way to combat anything."

She said she has a list of projects she hopes to take on, including measures to improve water conservation and adding solar features.

The other winners are the Marin Farmers Market Association, Treemasters, the Marin Arts Council,

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Northbay Family Homes and the Youth Academy  
Program of the Marin County Sheriff's Office.

Event planner Marinda Freeman said thte Marin Arts  
Council award is poignant because executive  
director Jeanne Bogardus will be retiring.

#### FOR MORE INFO

The luncheon is at the Embassy Suites Hotel in San  
Rafael on Nov. 14. Tickets are \$50 per person and  
are available by calling Freeman at 924-9145, or by  
mailing a check to the San Rafael Chamber of  
Commerce, Awards of Excellence Luncheon, 817  
Mission Ave., San Rafael, 94901 by Nov. 7.

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