

Consultant looks to spread green idea

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By **ANGELA D. SYKORA** Staff Writer

Green is the new black, a trend that ecological consultant Geoff Deigan of Gurnee is working to make a staple in our communities.

"We look at everything through a green lens," said Deigan of his Chicago-based firm, WRD Environmental, which has an impressive list of projects including Grayslake's Prairie Crossing Charter School and the award-winning "Fish Hotel" along the Michigan Avenue Bridge in Chicago.

Deigan said he went to college to become a teacher, but spent his summers working for a landscaping firm and discovered his green thumb. Upon graduation, he worked for the international environmental engineering firm Roy F. Weston Inc., at its Vernon Hills office.

After 10 years, Deigan said he "didn't feel like I was doing enough. I wanted to put the solution ahead of the problem, be proactive." Deigan approached the landscaping firm he once spent his summers working for and asked if they would be interested in getting into project consulting. "They lent me money to start a company," he said.

WRD Environmental was founded in 1997. Deigan said his goal is to create sustainable development that "serves today's needs without sacrificing the needs of future generations. And as a parent, I really take that to heart."

Prairie Crossing

Deigan's two children attend Grayslake's environmentally-conscious Prairie Crossing Charter School, the first certified "green" school in the state. He has also served on its school board since last October.

Deigan's firm did pro bono work for the charter school when it built additional facilities in 2004 to house more grade levels. WRD Environmental did the landscape master plan and served as project managers. Having the opportunity to lend his skills and expertise to the school "is phenomenal," Deigan said.

"We designed the school grounds to be an environmentally-friendly, curriculum-based, hands-on learning lab for students." Students have access to wildlife habitats, gardens and conservation projects right outside their door. "They really learn how to respect and appreciate the environment," said Deigan, who encourages new development to "go green" to improve our quality of life in the long term.

For example, he said, future commercial/retail plans for the Grayslake fairgrounds site at Routes 120 and 45 should include green features, like solar power.

"The most impact can be made by focusing on stormwater management, keeping as much of it on-site and reusing it, not overtaxing the sewer system," said Deigan, adding he would "love to be involved" in the project.



Geoff Deigan of Gurnee talks about the green-friendly environment of Prairie Crossing Charter School.

(Joe Shuman/For Pioneer Press)

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