

Clean City moves to clear Asheville air

By Daniel Hartis
STAFF WRITER

Only around 100 vehicles prevent the U.S. Department of Energy from designating Asheville a Clean Cities region, according to Bill Eaker, environmental services manager for the Land of Sky Regional Council.

"We hope to get designated by the U.S. Department of Energy as a Clean Cities region within the next year," said Eaker, coordinator of the local Clean Air Campaign and Clean Vehicles Coalition. "Based on the Department of Energy's formula, we have to have 400 alternative fuel vehicles in the region. We're right around 300 vehicles right now that we've identified."

The Clean Cities Program promotes vehicles which run on alternative fuels like biodiesel, ethanol, hydrogen, electricity and compressed natural gas, or CNG. Asheville opened its first CNG filling station a little more than a year ago. The station represents Asheville's dedication to the Clean Cities Program as well as the city's increasing interest in CNG.

"You have to show your commitment to alternative fuels and clean vehicles by actually having those vehicles in place in your region," Eaker said. "We also have to submit a program plan that spells out what we will do over a five-year period to further promote the use of alternative fuels."

Part of this plan involves using CNG in the city's own fleet, according to Kevin Haughinberry, stockroom supervisor for Asheville's fleet management division.

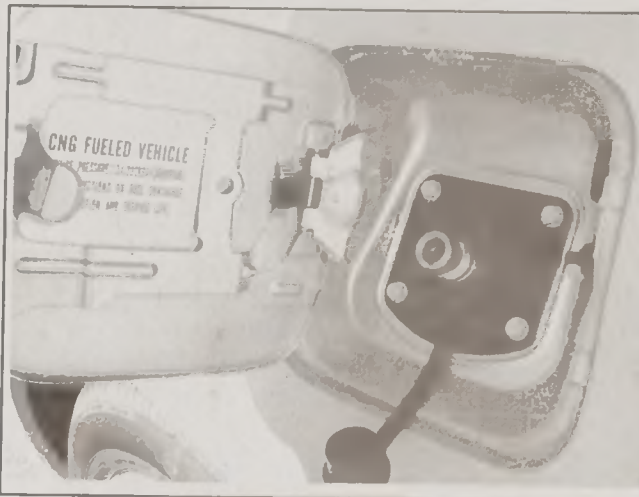
"The program seems to be working out fairly well," said Haughinberry, who also manages the CNG station down the street from the division. "We have a few vehicles, and we're buying more. We're looking at the feasibility of it for the Asheville transit."

The city's fleet includes several Honda Civics and General Motors trucks running on CNG, Haughinberry said.

CNG gives off less emissions than any other alternative fuel, said Ashley Featherstone, engineering supervisor at the Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency.

"The CNG vehicles have less pollution than any other vehicles currently available," Featherstone said.

The agency's fleet contains some



The specialty fuel tank for Fahrer's CNG fueled Civic.

of the 300 alternative fuel vehicles tracked by Eaker for the Clean Cities Program, according to Featherstone.

Because most ozone pollution comes from motor vehicles, the program benefits the local environment, Featherstone said.

"It should reduce the emissions from motor vehicles here in our area," Featherstone said. "It should definitely help."

Though CNG vehicles offer many environmental benefits, the vehicles often lack practicality, Haughinberry said.

"We're limited on our range," he said. "Many only go about 150 miles on a tank. That is a big drawback."

Only a few cities in North Carolina own CNG filling stations, and the distance between them is often further than a CNG vehicle's capacity.

"One of the big problems with the whole CNG thing is there's not much of an infrastructure," Haughinberry said. "If a citizen were to buy a CNG vehicle and

leave Asheville with it, he might have a problem."

Despite this, CNG vehicles are ideal for the city workers, as well as people using the car to get around Asheville and the surrounding areas, Haughinberry said.

"If I lived in Asheville, I'd be driving a CNG right now," he said. "Our station's top of the line. It's open to the public and you just need a credit card."

Vic Fahrer, an air quality engineer who works with Featherstone at the WNCRAQA, swipes his credit card at the station whenever he fills up his Honda Civic GX. He purchased



Victor Fahrer, air quality engineer, with his Honda Civic GX, which produces no emissions and received the title of "cleanest internal combustion vehicle on the planet." The sticker (pictured right) proclaims the car's status as an alternative fuel-burning vehicle.



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JESSICA BLYTHE - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Arnold The Orange Fish, one of Williamson's original pets.

Pet of the Week: Fish as remnants of love lost

By Hannah Doyle
STAFF WRITER

Though sophomore Alex Williamson said the bubbling in the fish tank above his bed soothes him at night, there's one thought that doesn't: the three fish living in it are all linked to failed relationships.

Williamson said his hometown ex-girlfriend bought the original two fish for him: Arnold The Orange Fish and Adair, a small, silver guppy.

"My ex-girlfriend found this tank in her attic," Williamson said. "That's where they live now. All of those little rocks in the tank are hers too, and I have them. She has my Sufjan Stevens CDs, though, so I guess we're even."

His ex-girlfriend bought the two fish during the summer and she broke up with him two weeks into fall semester when he returned to his hometown to visit, according to Williamson.

"My fish were orphaned," he said.

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My girlfriend found the tank in her attic. She has my Sufjan Stevens CDs though, so I guess we're even.

ALEX WILLIAMSON
sophomore student

Jasper, the last of Williamson's three fish, joined the tank in October.

"Jasper was linked to someone from a fling I had last semester," Williamson said. "We went to PetSmart, and I just wanted to look at the fish since I wanted one. I didn't really have any money with me, so she was like, 'I'll buy it for you,' because it was only \$3 or something."

But Jasper suffered a similar fate, Williamson said.

"He was later also orphaned. Well, actually, he was kind of out of wedlock, I suppose," he said.

Freshman Alyssa Teat, who bought Jasper, said she rarely sees him anymore.

"I never really intended to abandon my fish that I bought for him," Teat said. "He's still kind of my fish, so I guess I'd be sad if he died."

Still, Teat said she doesn't feel like a failed parent.

"Every time I go over there, I check to make sure that the fish is still alive," she said. "I always tend to my fish when I see it."

After the two relationships failed, he alone had to care for the fish, according to Williamson.

"Now they're all linked to failure, and there's very little happiness in that fish tank," he said. "Except that I like them because they didn't do anything to me at all."

Though he jokes about the fishes' bad connections, he said he doesn't actually resent them.

"It's kind of funny how even though they're all kind of linked to bad memories, they're still really comforting," he said. "In a way, they're sort of reminders of not being alone. They keep me company."

Williamson said there could be fish bought with future romantic interests.

"It's possible," he said. "There are plenty of other fish in the tanks at PetSmart."

Terra Diva fuses fashion with consciousness

By Maggie West
STAFF WRITER

Forget your flip flops and pack up your parkas. Environmentally conscious clothing just got a lot more fashionable thanks to the efforts of one local merchant.

"In the past, people have had to compromise their style in order to wear environmentally friendly clothes," said Cori Gardner, owner of Terra Diva. "Now there are so many more fashionable options."

Terra Diva, located at 80 North Lexington Ave., specializes in fashionable clothing made from environmentally conscious fibers, according to Gardner.

The store, which has been in business for over three years, offers a wide range of products. While a dress made out of bamboo fibers can cost over \$120, a camisole set made out of soybeans can be purchased for under \$30.

"I always thought 'environmental' clothes were just itchy hemp shirts and hippie-looking garden shoes," said Brittany Hart, a sophomore political science student. "But Terra Diva has really awesome looking clothes."

After moving to their current location sales increased 60 percent, which is partially due to Asheville's dedication to environmentally sound products, according to Gardner.

"People around here pay so much attention to what they consume, and yet we absorb so many toxins through our skin," she said. "I think it's important to pay attention to what we put on our bodies,



Store Manager Melody York dresses a dummy for display with a bamboo dress from the company Same Underneath.

as well as what we put in them." Natural fibers are both softer and longer lasting, according to Gardner. Unlike bleached cotton, textiles such as organic cotton grow softer with each wearing.

eco-friendly clothing continues to expand, businesses all around the country are beginning to take an interest in environmentally conscious textiles. Organic Exchange,

a non-profit trade association, expects global organic cotton sales to reach over \$2 billion worldwide by the end of 2008, according to a recent study done

MELODY YORK
Terra Diva store manager

by the organization. "I guess people just want the things closest to their skin to be natural," York said.

Gardner maintains that the use of natural fibers, such as bamboo, soy and organic cotton, is essential to the earth's preservation.

"As we overpopulate the earth, we have to take care of the land around us," Gardner said.

The use of natural fibers has much less impact on the environment, according to Organic Exchange. A recent study by the nonprofit group revealed that it takes over one third of a pound of pesticides to produce one cotton T-shirt.

"Until recently, I had no idea how many pesticides it took to produce regular clothing," Hart

said. "It really makes me respect Terra Diva for selling natural and organic clothing."

Although a few items in the store are made from more conventional fibers, almost all the clothing in Terra Diva is made in fair wage factories.

"The store is really concerned with work ethics," York said. "We just wanted to make sure that almost all of our clothing was sweatshop free."

The store makes an intense effort to follow up on their manufacturers and the conditions their clothing is manufactured in, according to Gardner.

"I think when you can feel good about what you wear and the way it was made, you are going to look stylish," York said.

In addition to most of their products being environmentally and ethically sound, much of Terra Diva's merchandise is made from local designers.

"Almost all of our jewelry is made locally," York said. "We really like to support the little guys."

Terra Diva also sells some local lingerie lines, according to Gardner.

Before they began running Terra Diva, both Gardner and York designed and sold clothing themselves.

"I used to sell clothes I made at Grateful Dead shows," Gardner said. "Every time someone found out one of the shirts were made of hemp they'd be like 'Hey man, can I smoke this.'"