

PROS GO green

Program helps homeowners make smarter decisions about energy efficiency

BY CHERYL STUCK | CORRESPONDENT
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It's happened many times before — one home improvement project leads to another. That was the story when David Miles decided to finish his basement and then went on to tackle the drafty areas in his home, making it

more energy efficient at the same time.

Miles, president of Process Machinery Inc. in Shelbyville, had been considering a geothermal system for a long time. This kind of system uses the ground's constant temperature to provide heat and cooling to a structure.

The 5,500-square-foot house — not including the unfinished basement — originally had three heat pumps and three gas furnaces. Miles said he realized that he wanted to make the changes to the heating and cooling system before finishing the basement area. "Otherwise, we were going to close the door on doing geothermal down the road."

Following a suggestion from Vince Kimbel, owner of Kimbel Construction Inc., Miles attended a two-hour seminar conducted by The Energy Pros Inc., a group of contractors and suppliers

who educate the public on energy-efficient housing and remodeling.

"I found out that I didn't know as much as I thought I did," Miles said.

As a result, Miles and his wife, Linda, hired Kimbel to handle the remodeling work and help them improve its energy efficiency. The couple replaced about 40 windows with the energy-saving Andersen brand. They also brought in

Kelly Doyle, operations manager for The Energy Pros Inc., stands with a display showing Superior Walls, a brand of pre-insulated wall panels with concrete studs that have holes for wiring and plumbing and enough space to add extra insulation if desired.

RON BATH | BUSINESS FIRST



CONSTRUCTION

Doing it right

Energy Pros seminar presenter Bob Geswein offers the following tips for do-it-yourselfers looking to conserve energy. Geswein is the energy-efficiency specialist for electric cooperative Harrison REMC in Indiana.

Change the five most-used light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs.

To reduce heat loss through windows, consider installing solar blinds, which can be a quick and easy fix that can make a difference.

But, Geswein cautions, "people have to understand there are some things they can do and some things they should hire to be done. And there are some products out there that may in some cases require machinery to install."

He said that improper air sealing (caulking) can result in dangerous back drafts in homes that use gas, which could cause a carbon monoxide problem "and kill people."

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The Energy Pros

Louisville chapter: 11608 Electron Drive, Louisville, KY 40299

Web site: www.theenergypros.net

Louisville chapter monthly meetings:

The second Tuesday of each month: 6:30-8:30 p.m. |

Foundations of a group

Dave Mikels, president of The Energy Pros Inc. and branch manager of Graber Insealators, came up with the idea to form a group of contractors to educate the public on energy conservation at home after trying to convince builders of the value of spray foam insulation.

Mikels said that energy conservation is common in other states where electricity costs are much higher than in Kentucky, but locally the education on energy-saving products has been lacking.

In 2005, Mikels, together with Dennis Beckett, territory manager for WaterFurnace International, and Damian Pataluna, now president and owner of FischerSIPS formed The Energy Pros and hired Bob Geswein, the energy-efficiency specialist for electric cooperative, Harrison REMC in Indiana to present monthly seminars. They began in an empty warehouse.

"The building science is evolving with new technology, and we're constantly watching it. What we were teaching five years ago is not the same thing."

DAVE MIKELS
The Energy Pros

Since its beginning, the group has expanded to five locations: Louisville, Lexington, Evansville, Bloomington, and Southern Indiana (at Clark County REMC). The company is structured with The Energy Pros Inc. as the parent company, controlling the five locations, plus each location operates as a separate entity in its own market.

The organization has grown to include nearly 30 contractors, who are sponsors, and it has a board of directors. The organization has educated nearly 5,000 people. |

Mikels said a key to the group's success is its focus on education and the science of building without promoting brands.

The Energy Pros offer three seminars:

- **High Performance Homes** is a two-hour seminar that covers the most important energy-saving decisions in building a home.

- **Greenovations** is a seminar for existing homes. "It's renovation in a green way," said Kelly Doyle, operations manager for The Energy Pros.

- **The New Construction Workshop** offers more in-depth information valuable to builders and contractors.

Mikels said the organization now offers continuing-education credits to industry professionals such as Realtors, architects, and contractors.

"The building science is evolving with new technology, and we're constantly watching it," he said. "What we were teaching five years ago is not the same thing. I can't tell you how many times consumers will come to a seminar and come back the next month with their builders."

CONSTRUCTION

After seminar, couple made efforts to improve home's efficiency

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The Energy Pros members Graber Insealators Inc. to add foam insulation in the attic space, as well as around the top of the foundation and crawl spaces, and Allgeier Air, which installed the geothermal heating and air conditioning system.

Miles said he is "thrilled to death" with the results. "None of those things were earth-shaking," he said. "But, in cumulative value, the difference in how the house feels now and how it felt then is significant."

And although the remodeling project is not finished, the couple already has seen a reduction in their energy costs, spending as much as \$90 per month in the summer to cool their home as opposed to \$140 per month before the upgrades.

"We don't know the true impact of the savings because we've been working on the basement trying to get it remodeled with saws and drills and air compressors going

and doors left open constantly."

The total cost of the insulation, windows, and geothermal system was about \$65,000.

"I don't know that I'll ever get that money back," Miles said, "but I don't want to live in a house with drafty areas. By fixing these problems, we've got the comfort level we enjoy. And that's worth something. I wanted the problem to go away, and it did."

The Energy Pros educate consumers and contractors

Many consumers would love to save energy but don't know where to start.

Kelly Doyle, operations manager for The Energy Pros said, "we invite anyone who will listen" to The Energy Pros' two-hour, free seminar, which is held monthly. The seminar, High Performance Homes 101, provides valuable information with no sales pitch, Doyle said.

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■ The Miles replaced about 40 windows with an energy-saving brand, had foam insulation added throughout and installed a geothermal heating and air conditioning system.

CONSTRUCTION

Group educates homeowners, contractors on saving energy

ENERGY | FROM PRECEDING PAGE

The Energy Pros seminar presenter Bob Geswein is the energy-efficiency specialist for electric cooperative Harrison REMC in Indiana and has been educating the public for Harrison REMC and other groups in several states since 1996. He has conducted more than 100 energy seminars each year for the past three years including all of The Energy Pros seminars.

"In the past, homeowners trusted builders for everything," Geswein said. "Now, homeowners have heard enough about some of this stuff that they're intrigued. They want it. In a sense, we've teased them with marketing information ... but they're confused because they don't know how to make it all happen."

UPCOMING SEMINAR

Seminar: High Performance Homes
When: Tuesday, Dec. 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
What: The five most important decisions homeowners need to think about when building or remodeling a home. The Energy Pros educators will cover the details of foundations, air sealing and framing, windows and doors, insulation and energy efficient HVAC system.

Where: 11608 Electron Drive, Louisville, Kentucky 40299

Cost: Free; reservations requested; call (502) 266-8871 or go to The Energy Pros Web site.

SOURCE | WWW.THEENERGYPROS.NET

Consumers should do their homework

Ferguson Enterprises, located on Poplar Level Road, is a bath, kitchen and lighting gallery and partners with The Energy Pros on plumbing education. Courtney Scott, showroom manager, said that as more homeowners do research online, they come into her business' showroom in increased numbers, asking for low-flow faucets and

showerheads and high-efficiency toilets that use less water to flush.

But Geswein said that before consumers talk to a contractor, attending a program such as The Energy Pros seminar will educate and enable them to choose a contractor who is "on the same page."

"I tell people all the time it's not for me to recommend a contractor," he said. "But after we get finished with this seminar, you will have enough understanding to be able to tell the difference between contractors who get it and those who don't, so you've got a basis for making a decision about which contractor you want to do business with."

Building a better homeowner

David Weis, owner of Meridian Construction LLC, joined The Energy Pros because of his desire to build more energy-efficient homes, but has found

the organization to be a great tool to educate his clients.

At his first meeting with a client, he recommends they attend The Energy Pros program. Weis said he has never had a client say the seminar was a waste of time. "They all leave with a better understanding of how to build a better house."



On view

At their Electron Drive location, The Energy Pros have displays showing various ways to save energy through home construction.

Left: This "California corners" method of wall construction allows insulation to be added behind the studs after a corner is built.

Right: This display shows how a Dryerbox can be installed in a home allowing for a shorter connection hose between the vent and clothes dryer, meaning increased energy efficiency. |



PHOTOS BY RON BATH | BUSINESS FIRST

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