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Going green — just for the love of it

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Local businesses get into the green act for Earth Day 2008

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Roberto's couldn't believe how much cardboard they used in a week until they signed up with the Sierra Conservation Project and started recycling it every week. .MAMMOTH TIMES PHOTOS/LARA KIRKNER

Earth Day began with an idea in 1962. Senator Gaylord Nelson wanted to put the environment into the political limelight by hosting a nationwide grassroots demonstration on behalf of Mother Earth. Since its first celebration in 1970 Earth Day is held every April 22.

As Earth Day 2008 approaches, sponsors High Sierra Energy Foundation, Sierra Conservation Project and the Mammoth Times are showcasing several of Mammoth's local businesses in the media limelight for their outstanding efforts to lead the community in going green.

Three businesses topped the list, though there are many more there making efforts as well. Mammoth Liquor, Creative Image Embroidery and Roberto's were all chosen, since they participate in recycling programs with Sierra Conservation Projects, as well as lighting efficiency programs with the High Sierra Energy Foundation. Mammoth Ski and Racquet Club also made the list for the same reason, but had not been reached for comment at press time.

Mammoth Liquor and Creative Image were both approached by Rick Phelps, Executive Director of the High Sierra Energy Initiative's Direct Install Program, sponsored by Southern California Edison. This program provides businesses with free energy efficient products, and includes free installation and long-term savings on electric bills.

"When Rick first approached me, my first thought was 'What's the cost going to be?,' but when I found out it was free I was all for it," said Spike Todd, owner of Mammoth Liquor. "It's really a no-brainer. They come in and replace all the lights, and then you end up saving on your electric bill. What's not to love?"

Roberto's, while not approached by Phelps first, gave the energy foundation a call when they learned of the program, and received an independent retrofit.

"It's a totally painless process," said owner Joanie Schaller. "We are in the middle of it right now

and waiting for the fluorescent lights to be changed because they have to use certain electricians.”

Long-time recyclers, as well, Roberto's Schaller claimed Sierra Conservation Project is extremely professional in what they do, and the cost to have them pick up the recycling is worth it.

“We've always recycled our glass, but SCP also picks up our cardboard,” Schaller said. “I never realized how much cardboard we used until I saw it stacked, waiting for the guys to pick it up.”

Todd also has his cardboard picked up when the SCP truck comes by to empty the recycle bin outside the front of the store.

“[SCP and HSEF] are the ones that are setting the example for the community,” Todd said. “It's really no skin off my back and I think if you can afford the recycling, you should take part in it.”

“It's all about Mother Earth and I'm just doing my part,” said Melinda Verdier, owner of Creative Image. “So few people recycle, and it's so easy to do.”

Verdier not only has energy efficient lighting at her business, courtesy of the energy foundation and Southern California Edison, but she also has the lighting at her condo.

“It's more of a personal benefit,” Verdier said. “No one really notices a difference at my business.”

Both Todd and Schaller agreed that the choices they made were less about advancing their businesses and more about “taking care of the beautiful place we live in,” as Schaller put it.

To learn how to become involved in recycling with Sierra Conservation Project, visit www.recyclesierra.com or call Brian Robinette at (760) 914-0115. To get involved in the High Sierra Energy Foundation's lighting programs visit www.highsierraenergy.org or call (760) 934-4650.