

APARTMENT WATCH | 5

Not-so-soothing sounds

What's a tenant to do when mechanical noises keep waking up the baby and the landlord won't do anything?



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Spring awakening

"Delicately beautiful" and "ruggedly resilient," Starlite Prairieblues false indigo will flower this month.

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SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2008 | EDITOR: TERESA BUDASI | C

Let's get into it



Owners of certified Chicago bungalows can take measures to improve the energy efficiency in their homes.

More energy grants for bungalow owners

HOME DIGEST | Funding boosted for insulation, doors, windows and water-saving devices

BY BILL CUNNIFF
bcuniff@suntimes.com

The Historic Chicago Bungalow Association will provide energy efficiency grants of up to \$6,000 — an increase from the previous level of \$3,000. The funds can help homeowners pay for sealing, insulation and heating/cooling systems.

Three Green Bungalow blocks have demonstrated that owners who take basic energy conservation steps can save as much as \$2,000 per year on their heating/cooling and lighting bill, the HCBA said.

"We are very excited about the increase that reflects what we have learned from our Green Bungalows over the past few years," said Annette Conti, executive director of the HCBA. "With more than 100 homes fully retrofitted, we know what it takes to make a home energy efficient and therefore homeownership more affordable for the benefit of owner and community alike."

Under the expanded Bungalow Energy Savers Program, homeowners can apply for grants to cover most of their energy efficiency needs, including insulation, new heating and cooling systems, hot water heaters, replacement of doors and windows, and installation of water-saving devices (such as low-flow

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Crew members from "Renovation Nation" — a new show on the new Planet Green channel (formerly Discovery Home) — prepare to shoot scenes at the home of "green" architects Ron and Lisa Elkins. | BRIAN JACKSON/SUN-TIMES PHOTOS

'RENOVATION NATION' TELEVISION | Local eco-friendly homeowners featured on new 'Planet Green' channel

BY CELESTE BUSK
cbusk@suntimes.com

The Discovery Home Channel is going green in a big way — and Chicago is playing a big part in its new eco-centric programming.

The cable channel has renamed itself "Planet Green" and on Wednesday will become the first 24-hour "eco-lifestyle network," attempting to educate while entertaining, with programming focused on conservation, sustainability and healthy living.

Joining Planet Green will be a diverse group of celebrities and personalities, including Adrian Grenier, Tom Bergeron, Emeril Lagasse, Maria Menounos, Tom Brokaw and Tom Green, who will share their passion for the planet through series and specials.

One of the shows, "Renovation Nation," taped episodes at a half-dozen locations throughout Chicago last month. The show, which premieres at 5 p.m. Thursday (a 30-minute preview can be seen at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday), encourages energy efficiency by presenting ex-



"Renovation Nation" host Steve Thomas (right) chats with Lisa (left) and Ron Elkins about their home in the DePaul/Sheffield area of Lincoln Park.

amples, demonstrations and tips on making the process of going green as affordable and simple as possible.

"Renovation Nation" is hosted by Emmy Award-winning handyman Steve Thomas ("This Old House"). The show's

premise is simple: Thomas goes around the country and visits with eco-sensitive homeowners and builders who have made the choice to go green. He will profile both completed homes and those still undergoing renovation.

Thomas and the "Renovation Nation" film crew visited homes on Chicago's North Side and the Far South Side, the Museum of Science & Industry's "Smart Home: Green + Wired" exhibit (The fully functioning, free-standing home is on display on the museum's grounds through Jan. 4, 2009.)

The crew also filmed at City Hall in the Loop. Chicago turned its own City Hall 20,000-square-foot rooftop into garden several years ago and leads the country in promoting green roofs that give off oxygen, absorb heat and rain and insulate against the weather. The city also offers residents the Green and Cool Roof programs, which provide funds to help offset installation cost (For details, call the city's Department of Environment at (312) 744-2994; www.cityofchicago.org/environment).

On with the show

We caught up with Thomas and the film crew in the DePaul/Sheffield ne

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FROM THE COVER

TV SHOW | North Side architects go green for the cameras

borhood, where they were filming work done on the vintage row-house owned by Ron and Lisa Elkins. The Elkins are both architects specializing in green construction and design through their home-based firm, 2 Point Perspective. Ron and Lisa are LEED accredited architects. (The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, provides standards for environmentally sustainable construction.)

The Elkins were contacted by the TV show most likely "through our Web site [2pointperspective.net] and because we're green architects," Lisa said. The Elkins bought their 125-year-old home three years ago. Although the home was in move-in condition, the couple planned to do improvements at a later date, especially work that focused on energy conservation. After the call from Planet Green, the Elkins decided to move forward and agreed to be filmed for the show.

The Elkins' green renovations included new insulation made of recycled, shredded blue jeans to the top floor of their two-story home. They also installed a grey-water system, which recycles shower and bath water to flush a toilet. The couple, who also design eco-friendly furniture, also are in the midst of creating a new dining room table made from a slice of a trunk from a fallen tree.

"We put in a dual-flush toilet on the second floor," Lisa said. "We've always wanted to put one in and now was a good time. They're really not that expensive. I think we paid \$200."

Contractors were hard at work with power saws buzzing during as the film crew focused on the installation of the Elkins' new kitchen countertops that are made of recycled glass. The kitchen also was getting new bamboo woodwork and new cabinet doors.

"We also installed a heat pump, which will save us half in energy costs," Ron said. "The greywater system cost about \$300 and will help conserve water that otherwise would go down the drain."

Avid green enthusiasts, the Elkins hope that by showing their energy-saving improvements on



The "Renovation Nation" camera gets up close to a worker in the Elkins' kitchen. | BRIAN JACKSON/SUN-TIMES PHOTOS

"I've been interested in green building for a long time. The term 'green building' only became a general term in the last few years."

STEVE THOMAS
"Renovation Nation" host

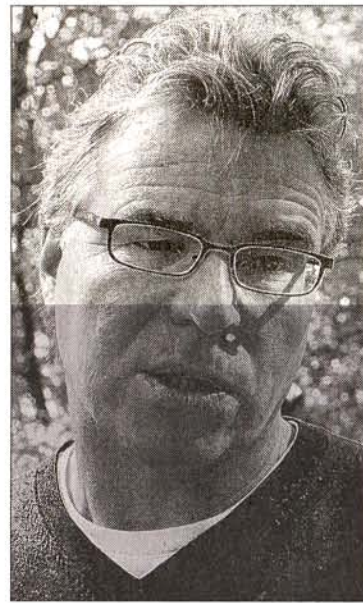
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the new Planet Green show, it will encourage others to follow suit.

"People can make a difference," Ron said. "You don't have to do big projects. Just little things like turning off the lights, turning down the thermostat or buying Energy Star appliances can all help make an impact."

Which is precisely the point of "Renovation Nation."

As for Thomas, he says, "I've been interested in green building for a long time. It just wasn't called 'green' at the time. The term 'green building' only became a general term in last few years. It describes many things we were al-



ready doing to create energy efficient buildings. Things like using good insulation, energy efficient windows, Energy Star appliances and other measures to seal up a home to reduce [operating] costs."

Thomas has encouraged sustainable building and energy conservation technologies in new and old houses for more than 20 years. He currently consults on residential building and renovation for clients throughout the United States. He also has renovated a number of old houses himself, including an 1846 Greek Revival residence and the 1836 Colonial Revival home where he

WATCH IT!

"Renovation Nation" filmed at the following locations for upcoming episodes on the new Planet Green network:

- ◆ The 2100 block of North Bissell
- ◆ The 3900 block of North Claremont
- ◆ The 200 block of North Albany
- ◆ The 6000 block of North Menard
- ◆ The 7700 block of South Throop
- ◆ City Hall in the Loop
- ◆ Smart Home exhibit on the grounds of the Museum of Science and Industry

The Chicago-themed air dates are still being determined. For more information, check local TV listings or www.PlanetGreen.com.

lives with his wife and son in a seaport town north of Boston. The handyman's most recent project is the renovation of a cottage on a small island off the coast of Maine, which employs numerous green and energy-efficient technologies and products.

"The new show comes at a time when resources are expensive and the costs of building and renovation costs are up. People are also more concerned about health in the home. And there is a new design aesthetic emerging now that favors smaller buildings over what we now call 'mansions.' So, the time for a show like this is right now."