

# Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2010

## SUCCESS STORY: FL GREEN TEAM

# Fort Myers-based company changes with times, finds success once again

### Found a big market by going green

BY DON MANLEY • DMANLEY@NEWS-PRESS.COM • JANUARY 22, 2010

*Rising interest in energy conservation, solar energy and all things “green” has lifted the fortunes of the FL Green Team during the recession. The Fort Myers-based company is a licensed air-conditioning and solar energy contractor.*

Residential construction’s demise, locally, crushed demand for what was one of the company’s main revenue generators: pool heat pump sales and installations. But that downward slide was offset by a dramatic upswing in demand for solar energy products.

Gross revenues dropped from \$14 million in 2005 to a little less than \$7 million last year, said the company’s owner, Reed Wilson. However, sales for other services - high-efficiency air-conditioning sales and air-conditioning system service, solar electric systems, home insulation, ductwork analysis and more - doubled in 2009, rising to \$2.5 million. Wilson expects 2010 sales for those services to match last year.

“I think what I’ve been able to do is evolve to take advantage of the new consciousness,” said Wilson, 56, of south Fort Myers.

Federal and state tax credits and rebates, and utility company rebates implemented over the past four years have driven the increased interest in solar electric systems, he said.

The company focuses on home energy audits that check such things as ductwork, windows and air conditioning systems for leaks and efficiency. It then provides recommendations for improvements. The audits are free, but can result in jobs for ductwork replacement and the installation of high-efficiency air conditioners and solar water heaters.

FL Green Team installed a new air-conditioning system in early September for Ron Gray of the Eagle Ridge development in south Fort Myers. Gray said he thoroughly researched air-conditioning systems and received quotes from several companies before selecting the Green Team. Wilson personally visited Gray’s home to examine the old system, take measurements and answer questions, he added.

“The end result is he ended up (installing air-conditioning systems) for three neighbors near us and we’re all happy,” Gray said.

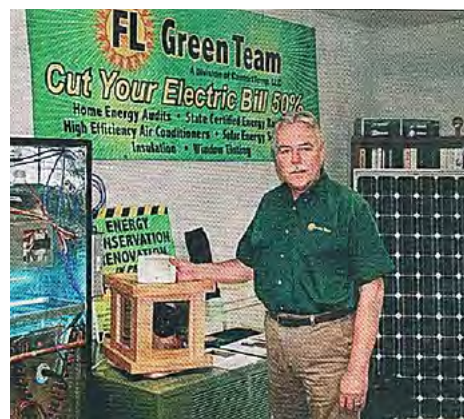
Wilson said the downturn forced him to trim some staff, but over the last year, he’s added 10 employees and anticipates adding another 10 to 15 in 2010 to serve as home energy auditors, office staff, installers and service technicians. The company employs 18 now.

“I can’t think of a more exciting field than energy conservation,” Wilson said. “My job is never going to get exported and I’m passionate about it. It’s fun to make money doing something you’re passionate about.”

Joe and Elizabeth Taylor are among the neighbors who followed Gray’s lead by becoming a FL Green Team customer. Their new high-efficiency air-conditioning system was installed in November.

“We were very impressed with them,” Elizabeth Taylor said. “We had about seven different estimates and he was probably the best informed and the price was the most reasonable. And he’s a real people person. He talks to you like he’s not just selling you something, he’s trying to help you out.”

FL Green Team also owns Aquatherm Solar Supply, which distributes solar energy systems statewide, and Aquatherm Heat Pumps, which produces high-efficiency pool heat pumps. The company expanded beyond Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties into Manatee and Sarasota counties at the beginning of the year. Wilson said the new markets have been very receptive to FL Green Team. And further growth is in the plans. “We’re definitely in the expansion mode,” Wilson added “I hope to have three other outlets open in the next three years.”



### ABOUT THIS BUSINESS

**What:** FL Green Team

**Where:** Showroom and offices at 2213 Andrea Lane, located off U.S. 41 in south Fort Myers

**Phone:** 432-1500

**Web:** FLGreenTeam.com

### TIPS FOR BUSINESS

#### SUCCESS

- Find a passion in your life and figure out a way to make a living at it
- Hold yourself accountable
- Be driven to success and only expect of others what you’re willing to do yourself
- Be an optimist