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STRAW BALE HOMES FOREVER

Environment-friendly abodes showcased - and that is hay
POMONA - Hay is not just for horses - it's for houses, too.

Straw-bale homes have become popular among those choosing an environment-friendly lifestyle, says Drew **Hubbell, an architect for Hubbell and Hubbell Architects in San Diego** who ran Tuesday's session of The Solar Living Institute and John T. Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies' Sustainable Workshop at Cal Poly Pomona.

Unlike typical building materials, straw is a renewable resource that can be used for the walls of a house, providing more insulation and cheaper energy and building costs, Hubbell said. **Hubbell and co-worker Mark Tighe**, a design builder, gave a presentation on the qualities and benefits of straw-bale homes.

It was the first part of a two-day, hands-on workshop for those planning to build a new home out of straw. "Straw-bale homes are much more sustainable than traditional stick-framed homes," said **Hubbell**.

Attendees began building a straw-bale wall with a window to be completed on the second day of the workshop. Cutting the bales of hay to the proper size was demonstrated and then done by the attendees before they began assembling the wall.

Kim Velez of Sunland is interested in building a straw-bale home because of its simplicity. "It doesn't seem as expensive as regular building," said Velez. "It's something a normal person can do. Whereas with traditional building there are things that are more complicated."

Despite what happened to the pig who built his house out of straw in the children's tale, straw-bale homes can withstand windy climates as well as most other weather conditions. They even have a better burn safety rating than traditional homes because the straw is very compacted, diminishing the amount of oxygen that can lead to combustion, **Hubbell and Tighe** said. According to **Hubbell**, a straw-bale house's biggest enemy is water. "You don't want moisture to get in the straw," said **Hubbell**. "You want to protect it from the rain." A moisture meter is a tool that measures the amount of moisture in the straw and is very important in the construction of straw-bale homes. If the straw has more than 20percent moisture, the material is unreliable. "Straw bale is much better for hot climates where there is less moisture," said **Hubbell**. "It works well in the cold, and rain is only a problem if it is driving against the wall for long periods of time."

Pat Ewing of Adelanto plans to build a straw-bale home herself after getting some lessons during the workshop. The warm and dry climate of the High Desert provides a good location. "Environmentally, straw-bale homes are good, the insulation value is good, and it's easy to do," said Ewing. "I can do it myself. I don't have to pay someone else to do it for me."