

Around the Bay

Hill Country Home Receives 5 Star Green Rating

By Linda Lambert
 You may have read this article in [Texas Hill Country Magazine's](#) recent winter issue. The Beacon is proud to publicize this outstanding award, given to two of our own HSB residents.

The HSB home of Karen and Joe Wilkens received the top honor of a 5 star rating from the Austin Energy Green Building program. The residential Green Building program rates new and remodeled homes using sustainable guidelines on a scale of one to five stars. Homes are rated in six areas: energy efficiency, water efficiency, material efficiency, health and safety, and community. Out of 726 homes rated in the past fiscal year, only 86 received the top 5 star rating. The Austin Energy Green Building program began 20 years ago and was the first of its kind in the United States.

The Wilkens beautiful home is located in The Trails of Horseshoe Bay, a gated community with six miles of hiking trails, an equestrian center and rolling hills with spectacular Hill Country views. Local materials and energy saving, low water use appliances were used throughout the home. The green philosophy of employing as many passive solar techniques as possible was especially appealing to the Wilkens. The following areas of solar consideration have been tested for many years and proved effective in keep-

ing green building costs lower: orientation on the lot, overhangs, heat-reflective metal roof, and sealed and insulated attic space. A screened sunroom at the back of the house is a delightful place to sit and read on rainy days. The stunning earth-toned rock on the outside walls came from their property and also from a quarry in Burnet. The same rock is used in a large cistern in the backyard which holds enough rainwater to run the household. The 3300 square foot, one story home takes full advantage of Texas outdoor living.

"When planning landscaping, I like to think of outdoor areas as separate rooms that are conversation and relaxation areas for ourselves and our guests," said Karen. One of the existing landscaped "rooms" is centered around a fire pit, and an iron candelabrum hanging from a mighty

Oak tree in the backyard beckons one to the lovely seating area below it. "Joe Karen says she first became interested in conservation practices in 1970, when she got involved in the first Earth Day as a biology teacher and taught her students the importance of being "good stewards of the environment." "Joe's career with 3M Company has led us on many adventures around the U.S. After living in 15 homes over a 40 year period, we know what floor plan works for us. We are very happy to be settled now in our dream home. We drew our first plan for it on a napkin during an airplane ride." Their early house planning included attending several seminars on green building. A course on the 7 steps of Green Building taught at Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin was particularly help-



An iron candelabrum hanging from a mighty Oak tree in the Wilkens backyard beckons one to the lovely seating area below it.

ful to the Wilkens, and they found their architect at a green conference at Austin Convention Center. Architect Nathan Winchester is from College Station, and he studied under Peter Pfeiffer of Barley & Pfeiffer, Austin. The builder/contractor was Cade Nelms.

When construction began on the Wilkens home they were surprised to discover dolomite (a mineral harder than granite) and sandstone just below the surface on their property. Blasting the rock out to prepare a space for a foundation took six weeks. Once begun, the 3300 square foot house took twelve months to build. The framing is composed of foam and steel panels with metal studs, installed by Transcon

Steel Company of Georgetown. The fire retardant insulated panels are covered with Tyvek, stone and mortar. A firewall separates the garage thermal envelope from the rest of the house. There is wood in the roof, but not the lower part of the house. The insulation is 5 1/2" thick foam. "We are basically living in a large cooler. One positive aspect is that termites don't like foam," said Karen.

A high energy, efficient Trane air conditioning and heating system was installed and complemented by overhanging porches on both the front and back of the house. There are two air conditioning systems, and the smaller unit is adequate for the house most of the time. Both sys-

tems include humidity sensors. The Wilkens have compared their electric bills with neighbors and found it to be 50% less than comparable sized homes. Realizing that the other main energy users are water heaters, the Wilkens installed a tankless water heater system. It heats water directly without the use of a storage tank, therefore avoiding the standby heat losses associated with storage water heaters. All windows in the home have low energy glass, and pleated shades are used on some with a honey-combed design for better insulation.

Another important aspect of this energy efficient home is that the attic is completely sealed and well insulated, and has a unique lath space cavity under the metal roof for better ventilation. "The heat and air conditioning system does not have to work as hard as it would with a hot attic," said Karen. "Our home faces east in front and west in back. Facing south is ideal for combating the Texas sun, but we worked hard to build substantial overhangs, which allow us to use our patios in all kinds of weather. We are planting shade trees each year to complement existing ones. Our home is positioned between a large dolomite outcropping in the front and a 300 year old Oak tree in the back. It was hit twice by twisters in the last four years, and lost some branches, but is still thriving. That mighty Oak and Indian Creek running through the back of our property were two main reasons we chose our lot. We will soon do vertical mulching and composting around the Oak

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The Wilkens home is proof that a green built home need not have a "cold as steel" atmosphere.

Hill Country Current Spotlight

"Let's Rodeo San Antonio!" PRCA's Largest Indoor Rodeo Returns with Entertainment, Shopping, and More

Once the holiday season is over and the new year has commenced, what affordable family entertainment is available? Look no further than the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo. February 3rd-20th, this event offers a family-friendly carnival, family fair, interactive and educational exhibits, over 650 vendors for shopping, horse and livestock shows, auctions, high-impact PRCA Rodeo action, and live concert entertainment.

Each year the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo also brings over two weeks of highly acclaimed entertainers to the main stage of the AT&T center for post-Rodeo performances. The Rodeo offers artists and comedy acts from every genre. The 2011 Lineup includes such entertainers as Lady Antebellum, Train, Ramon Ayala, Toby Keith, Martina McBride, Miranda Lambert, Blake Shelton, Bill Engvall, Clay Walker, Randy Rogers Band, Reba McEntire, Styx, MercyMe, and Eli Young Band.

Along with preserving western heritage, the

San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo is one of the largest educational assistance providers in the State, with \$105 million committed since inception.

The San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo is honored to announce that the sixth banner for Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association's (PRCA) Large Indoor Rodeo of the Year will proudly be displayed in the AT&T Center for the 2011 Stock Show & Rodeo. The San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo has been named the recipient of this prestigious industry award, consecutively, since 2005.

So, whether you plan to come and sample all that is "fair food," or you can't wait for the kids to see the pig races, or you simply want to shop the day away and then enjoy a top notch professional Rodeo and concert, the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo is the only place that can bring you all these things, all in one place! Rodeo tickets are now on sale for 2011.

Visit sarodeo.com for complete information.

Chart a Course for Austin and San Antonio for Annual Boat and RV Showcases

Three of the region's largest and most acclaimed sporting gear, water craft, and RV showcases will be held in Austin and San Antonio.

The full line-up of events includes the Austin Boat, Sport, & Outdoor Show on January 20-23, 2011. The Austin Boat Show has combined with the Central Texas Hunting and Fishing Show, resulting in an event featuring the area's top boat dealers plus an entirely new element of outdoor fun! A sampling of the highlights include over 400 watercraft, including a full line-up of cruisers, sailboats, fishing boats, wakeboard boats, ski boats, runabouts and personal watercraft; coastal fishing roundtable; boater safety and education courses; and a live catfish tank for children.

The Austin Boat Show will be in the Austin Convention Center. Visit www.austinboatshow.com.

The next event is the San Antonio Boat & RV Show on January 27-30, 2011. Whether you are interested in traveling the waterways or the highways, this event has it all! From motor

homes to travel trailers, fifth wheels to bay boats, center console fishing boats, and world class wakeboard boats, this event offers something for everyone. Over 300 watercraft and 100 recreational vehicles spanning 200,000+ square feet will be on display, with other highlights such as a coastal fishing roundtable, tackle workshops, ARMY Bass anglers display, and boater safety and education courses.

The San Antonio Boat & RV Show will be at the Alamodome. Visit www.sanantonioboatshow.com.

Finally, the Austin RV Expo takes place on February 17-20, 2011, where motor homes, pop-ups, travel trailers, truck campers, fifth wheels, and much more will be on display, providing a firsthand look at the very finest in recreational travel. The Expo is at the Austin Convention Center. Visit www.austinvexpo.com.



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Karen Wilkens is pictured in front of the 10,000 gallon cistern she and her husband Joe first envisioned after seeing a similar one on a trip to Italy and Greece. Inside the rock façade is a fiberglass tank surrounded by cinder blocks, mortar and rebar.

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tree with an auger to keep it healthy.”

The Wilkens got the idea for the attractive design of their cistern from one they saw on a trip to Italy and Greece. Inside the rock façade is a 10,000 gallon fiberglass tank surrounded by cinder blocks, mortar and rebar. The home's rainwater collection system was designed by Innovative Water Solutions of Austin. Water stored in the cistern is used throughout the house. Off the back 2/3 of the roof rainwater is collected through the galvanized gutters which feed into a trenched out system of pvc pipe. The property's

natural slope provides a gravitational route to the tank. Cistern water is pumped into a filtering system in the garage by a one horsepower pump. A pleated filter takes out large particles in the water, then it passes through a charcoal filter and finally an ultraviolet light that kills bacteria. “When we leave home we can turn off the entire system by turning off one valve. A mere one inch of rain falling on 1000 square feet of roof will provide 600 gallons in the cistern's tank and since we collect off about 4,000 sq. ft of roof space, we can collect about 2,400 gals with every inch of rainfall. Rainwater's pH is neutral so it is perfect for internal use and eliminates a need for water softening

systems. Since there is no calcium buildup appliances last longer. “At the front of the house, wine barrels at the end of each gutter catch rainwater that is used for Karen's vegetable garden.

“There are a lot of green inventions coming out that are not yet fully tested, but we are convinced that the importance of conservation will become an increasingly important priority in homebuilding as time goes on. People are beginning to realize that our water supply is not endless,” said Karen. Mary McLeod, the single-family coordinator for Austin Energy Green Building, recently stated: “The biggest misconception about green building is cost. Design is

where you get your savings. With any house, to get a good result you have to have a good design. If you get certain basics like orientation, window placement and overhangs right, chances are you'll have a house with low energy bills. Call us for green building information or to verify a home's star rating.” The main number for Austin Energy Green Building is 512-482-5300. Go to www.austinenrgy.com to find information on Green by Design workshops, held four times a year.

Now that their dream home is complete, Karen has more time for her many hobbies, like studying the large variety of native grasses around Indian Creek at the

back of their lot. “This is a real work in progress, but we are having fun with the finishing touches, like employing organic practices in the landscape. We have a worm compost bin, and brew aerobic compost tea for the gardens. Soon I'll start training native

vines around the cistern. We feel very fortunate to have chosen Horseshoe Bay as our final home.” A plaque in the Wilkens living area reads, “May our home always be too small to hold all of our friends.”



The Wilkens home is framed with foam and steel panels with metal studs. There is no wood in the lower part of the house and the insulation is 5 ½" foam. “We are basically living in a large cooler,” said Karen.