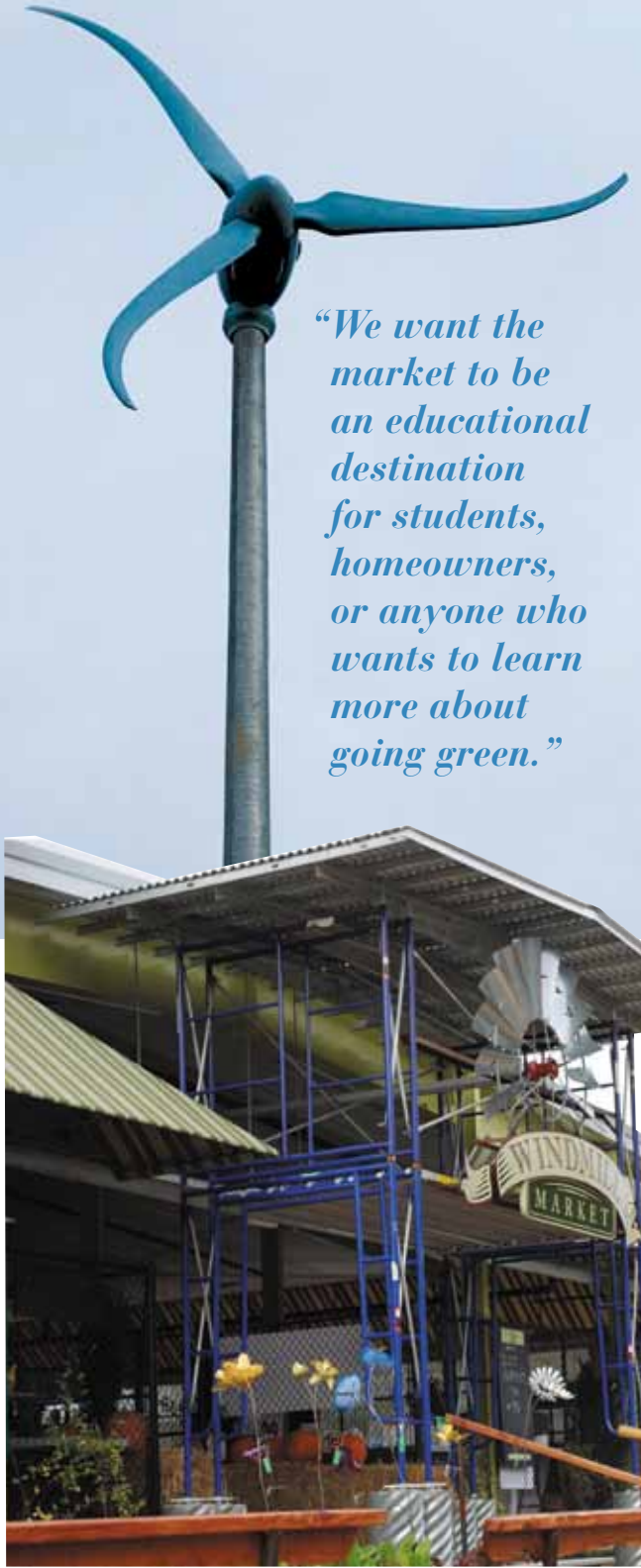


Windmill Market... an educational destination

By Sherry Sullivan



“We want the market to be an educational destination for students, homeowners, or anyone who wants to learn more about going green.”

Fairhope’s newly-opened Windmill Market has gone off the grid – or at least, it’s on its way there.

“This is the first customer we have to engage in generating their own electricity with the idea of selling some back to the utility,” said Fairhope Electric Superintendent Scott Sligh.

The Alabama Municipal Electric Authority, the wholesale power provider for Fairhope and 10 other Member cities in the state, is currently working on renewable generation standards and procedures.

Gina Walcott, proprietor of the market, along with her husband, Mac, says that under ideal conditions, the market’s 45-foot tall windmill and solar panels generate more energy than the market requires.

“In the future, we will be installing batteries so that we can store the energy to use when the wind is not blowing or the sun not shining. But the market is also about conserving energy, not just generating it,” she said.

The seasonal, open-air market has an extended roofline and awnings and is growing a ‘green’ wall to help reduce cooling costs; a geothermal air conditioning system uses the naturally cooler temperature of the Earth to cool enclosed spaces; rain water is collected to water a community garden and to flush low-flow toilets in the restrooms; and much of the market itself was built using re-purposed and recycled materials.

The Walcotts are also architects, and Mac Walcott says the market is a good testing ground for their projects.

“We are trying out a lot things here that we think our clients and others will be interested in.

We want the market to be an educational destination for students, homeowners, or anyone who wants to learn more about going green,” he said.

Windmill Market

Sligh said the market is a look at the future. “In the next five to 10 years, we are going to see a lot more interest in alternative ways to generate electricity, and Fairhope is in on the ground floor with the Windmill Market.”