

Workshop covers Martin from A-Z

BY JIM MAYFIELD
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STUART — It was back to class Friday for about 25 county residents who learned about sustaining Martin County's unique character during day-long orientation seminar.

Martin County 101: It's Different Here was presented by the Sustainable Martin Alliance at the Indian River State College Chastain Campus in Stuart. Topics included hydrology and native habitats, land use patterns, economics and social issues.

Though initially it might seem that competing disciplines such as economic development, land use and environmental protection might never find common ground, it is precisely the delicate interdependence of these and other fields that needs to be considered, moderator Stacy Ranieri said.

"Everything is so interdependent, and then there's the issue of unintended consequences. "It's the interconnection that's the key to sustainability," Ranieri said. Everything does better when all the systems function well.

Billed as a "judgment neutral" program, Ranieri said speakers agree to present information as ob-

jectively as possible.

"There is a tremendous amount of preparation to make sure the presentation is as objective as possible," Ranieri said. "There is a huge amount of information. We try to give a good nugget on each piece of the sustainability puzzle."

Indiantown Gas Co. President Brian Powers, who lectured on the county's economic history, said he enjoys the group.

"It's a good exchange of ideas. I find I learn some-

thing new each time I do this."

Immediate reviews after the workshop were positive.

"I was impressed," said Lauren Trubey, a 12-year Martin County resident and sales manager for Hutchinson Island Marriott. "It was very factual, and there were so many facets of information. It was very

carefully presented. You can walk away with your own opinion."

Stuart Downtown Main Street Association manager Barney Malone said the program was "the most knowledgeable thing I've attended in Martin County in 22 years.

More than 1,000 people have attended these workshops since 2002.