

Indiana's Green Giant

What do you get when you mix Willie Nelson, Leonardo da Vinci, Henry David Thoreau and a Hobbit? A man with musical acumen, creative genius, respect for nature, and a preference for living in a half-underground home — a man known as Vic Cook.

A musician-by-trade, educator and renewable energy advocate by destiny, Cook lives off the grid in the Giant, a home he designed and built himself from stone, timber and other materials gathered on his thick-wooded property outside Pendleton.

Cook, who observes that the two environmental issues that affect

Americans most are their homes and their transportation, is now focusing on creating an affordable electric hybrid vehicle. He's completed design work and has been presenting the concept to audiences in the Central Indiana area, as he seeks \$1.5 million to build the prototype.

Cook envisions a car that not only gets 60 miles per gallon running on ethanol, but also generates enough extra energy, to help power the owner's home. He's also committed to a production process so simple that the car could be assembled by a service station or small business.



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More than 40,000 guests have toured the Giant, and millions more have learned from TV documentaries and coverage about the high-tech home. The Giant is powered by solar panels and storage batteries, which produce enough energy to run two computers, a big-screen TV and a washing machine, not to mention a recording studio and a one-of-a-

kind refrigerator. The hollowed beech tree is positioned to take advantage of cool underground air. With the help of a tiny microchip, the freezer maintains temperatures that keep ice cream solid.

Cook, who's earned the President's Award for tourism and WRTV- Channel 6's Leadership Award, anticipates that he could complete the prototype of his vehicle in 14 to 18 months. “It is most assuredly the car of the future,” he says.

Betsy Sheldon writes regularly about topics of sustainability and is co-author of *Green Cleaning For Dummies* and a blogger for Wiley Publishing.

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