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Construction Underway on America's First "Living Building"

*Omega Center for Sustainable Living Slated to be First
Green Building to Achieve Both LEED® Platinum and
Living Building Challenge™ Certification*

RHINEBECK, NY – Omega Institute today announced that construction of their much anticipated Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL) is underway; Omega has laid the foundation for the building and will soon begin erecting its steel frame and flooring. Once completed, the OCSL is expected to be the first certified "Living Building" in the United States; in addition to being self-sustaining in terms of water and energy usage, the OCSL will raise the bar in green building by using the best and most comprehensive sustainable building practices available today.

The cutting edge technology of the OCSL brings together wastewater recycling, clean energy, green architecture, and other sustainability elements that can be replicated locally and globally. The center will also include a classroom and laboratory for educational programs.

"The OCSL represents Omega's 30+ year commitment to modeling an integrated way of looking at the world and our place in it," said Skip Backus, Executive Director at Omega Institute. "Each year more than 18,000 people visit Omega's Rhinebeck campus and many more thousands visit our website. As an environmental steward, Omega has a real opportunity to educate the public about sustainable living – from the food that we serve, to 100% of the campus electricity coming from wind and solar technology, to the OCSL itself," concluded Backus.

At the Greenbuild 2007 conference the OCSL was the sole winner of the Living Building Challenge™ "On the Boards Award" for a building in the design process which achieves the highest level of environmental performance. The OCSL was also a topic of panel discussion at the Greenbuild 2008 conference.

"Despite the huge growth of green building, we still have a long way to go to reduce the environmental impact of buildings and building operations," said Jason F. McLennan, CEO of Cascadia Region Green Building Council and founder of the Living Building Challenge. "The OCSL is a beautiful example of the transformation that needs to take place in architecture—good design coupled with a deep green philosophy. It gives me hope for the buildings of the future," stated McLennan. McLennan was a keynote speaker, along side Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Maude Barlow, and Dr. John Todd at Omega's recent Water of Life conference.

The OCSL groundbreaking ceremony was attended by more than 100 leaders from key environmental groups in New York State, local and state governmental officials, the project's architectural and engineering teams, and influential opinion leaders from the New York City metropolitan area.

The core of the center will be a 4,500-square-foot greenhouse containing a water filtration system called the Eco Machine™. This living system will use plants, bacteria, algae, snails, and fungi to recycle Omega's wastewater (approximately 5 million gallons per year) into clean water that will restore the aquifer under Omega's property. Dr. John Todd, winner of the 2008 Buckminster Fuller Challenge award, and his son Jonathan, are the founders of John Todd Ecological Design, Inc. – responsible for the design of the Eco Machine™.

"The Omega Center for Sustainable Living will be the first education center of its kind in the United States to combine the latest in green building and wastewater treatment technologies under one roof," said Dr. John Todd at the groundbreaking ceremony. "It will be built with the most cutting edge technology currently available and will demonstrate how we can live in harmony with nature rather than destroying it."

A \$2.8 million capital campaign is underway to fund the creation of the OCSL. Omega has already received \$100,000 from the Dutchess County Industrial Development Authority, among generous donations from others. Omega is seeking \$1.7 million to reach their goal.

For more information about the Omega Center for Sustainable Living please visit eOmega.org.

About Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

Founded in 1977, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is the nation's most trusted source for wellness and personal growth. As a nonprofit organization, Omega offers diverse and innovative educational experiences that inspire an integrated approach to personal and social change. Located on 195 acres in the beautiful Hudson Valley, Omega welcomes more than 23,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York and at exceptional locations around the world. eOmega.org

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