

# OMEGA

INSTITUTE FOR HOLISTIC STUDIES

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Contact: Chrissa Pullicino  
Office: 845.266.4444, ext. 233

## **Omega Institute Breaks Ground for State-of-the-Art Environmental Facility**

*Silda Wall Spitzer, Ned Sullivan, Pete Seeger, and  
Dr. John Todd Speak at Event*

RHINEBECK, NY – Last month, at a world summit on climate change, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, "We cannot continue with business as usual. The time has come for decisive action on a global scale." In response to this growing concern for our environment, Omega Institute is stepping up to launch the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL), a state-of-the-art environmental facility and education center that brings together wastewater recycling, clean energy, green architecture, and other sustainability elements that can be replicated locally and globally.

New York's First Lady, Silda Wall Spitzer, was the keynote speaker at the groundbreaking of this "visionary" project, which models Omega's environmental initiatives around an innovative wastewater treatment facility. The OCSL, the first of its kind for New York State, has drawn praise from the First Lady who was joined at the event by Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson, John Todd, ecological architect, and Pete Seeger, folk musician and environmental activist. The ceremony was held on Omega's Rhinebeck, New York campus.

"By combining 21st century green technology with eons-old natural processes, the OCSL demonstrates that technology, buildings, and nature can co-exist in a synergistic way," said First Lady Silda Wall Spitzer. "I'm certain that this forward-thinking model of sustainable development will inspire others to follow Omega Institute's lead."

"For thirty years Omega has been a leader in holistic, sustainable living. As an environmental steward, Omega is launching the center to address a growing concern – the lack of fresh, clean water," said Skip Backus, Executive Director at Omega Institute. "This is not just a problem of the developing world, it is a problem we all face, and Omega is demonstrating steps that can be taken toward a more sustainable future," concluded Backus.

The OCSL, a cutting-edge green facility, will supply all its own energy needs, recycle wastewater, and be an educational model to inspire sustainable living practices. The self-sustaining building will be heated and cooled using geothermal systems, and it will use solar and photovoltaic power. It will serve as the heart of Omega's ongoing environmental initiatives and will include a laboratory, greenhouse, water garden, constructed wetland, and a classroom which will be open year-round to visiting students of all ages. The \$2 million construction project, supported by donations, comes on the heels of Omega's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and is expected to be

finished and fully operational next year. The design team is headed up by Kansas City based BNIM Architects.

“Omega’s Center for Sustainable Living represents a bold and important vision for the organization and the Hudson Valley. I commend Omega for taking the initial steps toward making this vision a reality. Bringing together key stakeholders and leaders at this early stage demonstrates Omega’s commitment to the inclusive values it teaches and provides a model of responsible stewardship that others will no doubt follow,” stated Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson.

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 can be used to restore the aquifer. The Eco-Machine™ incorporates technology first seen in similar systems known as Living Machines. Dr. John Todd is generally credited for the initial development of Living Machines and is the founder of John Todd Ecological Design, Inc. His son, Jonathan Todd is the ecological architect for this project. Dr. John Todd also spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony.

"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. "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."

Omega welcomed leaders from key environmental groups in New York State, local governmental officials, the project’s architectural and engineering teams, influential professionals, opinion leaders from the New York City metropolitan area, and members of the media to the groundbreaking event.

### ***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 20,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York and at exceptional locations around the world.*

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