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Uwf President John Cavanaugh, third from left, joins other Pensacola community members in breaking ground for the BEST(Build, Educate, Sustainable Technology) House.

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## BEST House breaks ground

### Devopers unveil concept of house to be built on campus

**By: Stacey Lewis**

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It ain't easy being green.

But it very well could be, so say the innovators of BEST (Build, Educate, Sustainable Technology) House, a state-of-the-art, environment-friendly facility showcasing green building, energy efficiency and wind mitigation scheduled to be built on the University of West Florida campus.

Developers unveiled a sign revealing conceptual images of the 3,300 square-foot three-bedroom hose at the construction site on the northeast corner of the Campus Lane and Campus Drive intersection during a groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 28.

Present at the ceremony was president of Russell Home Builders and BEST House builder Philip Russell who summed up the concept tidily.

"I would deem the house a learning lab for residential home construction," he said. "It will serve as a means to disseminate product technologies more quickly."

The builder also noted that all of these technologies, along with most of the labor, are being donated, and not one federal or state dollar will go into the building of this home. He said that construction is scheduled to begin in January of 2008 and will take approximately 14 to 16 months to complete.

Russell listed several of the technologies involved, including passive solar collectors, rainwater catchment systems, a geothermal heat pump, advanced insulation systems, a hydrogen fuel cell, energy-efficient appliances, lighting, sustainable building products and finally photovoltaic panels that could potentially allow the house to be off-grid. In other words, no power bills.

Currently many of these products are beyond the scope of the typical consumer. However, Mick Donovan, chairman of the board for the Evergreen Demonstration House Corporation, the lead facilitator of BEST House, said that these concepts "are not rocket science" and that consumers simply need to change the mental state of "we've always done it this way" in order to embrace new ideas. He said the BEST House is a means to facilitate that change.

"What we think we can do with education and with this demonstration house is create a platform to educate everyone," Donovan said. "Not just the students but also consumers, architects, home builders - there's a broad

array of people that need to be aware of the technologies that we can use today to improve the way your house operates, to minimize the imprint that you leave on the environment and to still maintain the lifestyle that all of us would like to have."

Donovan explained some of the methods that designers will employ to educate visitors. He said that a three-car garage will serve as an exhibition center featuring a venue for speakers and a number of exhibits detailing products used throughout the house.

Inside the house, menu-driven flat panel monitors will be strategically placed to give visitors an opportunity to learn about the technologies interactively. There will be cutouts in the ceilings and walls to provide a cross-section view of construction, and partway through construction will be what Donovan calls a "Beyond the Walls Expo" allowing guests to view the house as it is being built. He also notes that technologies will constantly be updated, probably calling for the house to be shut down temporarily three to five years after its opening in order to totally renovate.

Beyond the mission of education, the developers of BEST House are also interested in the research and development opportunities the project has to offer as University faculty and staff collaborate with manufacturers to develop and test new products and technology, Donovan said.

Russell credits Environmental Health and Safety coordinator Tam Landis with presenting the University this opportunity for collaboration, relating how Landis, having been asked to fill a vacated seat on the Escambia County Windload Mitigation Committee, spoke up when she and friend George Rogers encountered difficulties getting the project off the ground in the county.

Landis recognized the potential value of the house and had no qualms about volunteering UWF property for the project.

"Because we have an outstanding construction engineering program, I thought the University would be an ideal site for the project," Landis said in a phone interview. "I told the committee it would be ideal as a teaching tool and for the community as a whole."

So with these words, the process of making a dream into reality was set in motion. The services of many other leaders in the industry have since been enlisted, among them the Evans Group, an architectural firm out of Orlando whose founder and president Don Evans addressed the crowd Friday, Pensacola-based Spenser Maxwell Bullock Architects and Jehle-Halstead Inc., a civil engineering and survey company.

Many UWF faculty, staff and students will be instrumental to the process as well, including Department of Architectural and Engineering Services associate vice president Jim Barnett, Engineering and Computer Technology chair Karen Rasmussen and Engineering and Computer Technology coordinator Glenda Mayo.

UWF president John Cavanaugh duly noted the University's role in this partnership of public and private sectors.

"It really does show just another way that the University is trying to partner with the community," he said to the almost 100 attendees of the ceremony. "It's a pleasure to be here to finally throw dirt on this project."

And that is precisely what the key players of BEST House did. Sporting white hardhats and brandishing golden shovels, they marked the momentous occasion by breaking new ground.

Donovan voiced his vision for BEST House and its potential impact.

"We can make a difference in how the country uses its natural resources and the way it treats its environment," he said. "Pensacola is a home-grown resource that could benefit the whole planet."

Construction of a BEST House Web Cam is currently underway and will soon be available for those wishing to

view the project's progress.

For further information, visit [www.uwf.edu/besthouse](http://www.uwf.edu/besthouse).

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