



## GREEN BUILDING

# Green Building through Education and Example

BY HEATHER V. SZYMANSKI

The current demand for green knowledge goes beyond certification needs. Making the transition to a green built environment necessitates education in all aspects of the building process. Everyone involved in creating and constructing the built environment needs to be engaged; from the general public to the building code professionals, constructors, regulators, designers and everyone in between. The Green Building Institute helps everyone to navigate the overwhelming wave of opportunities available at this time.

The GBI was founded in August 2004 by Stanley J. Sersen NCARB, LEED®AP, RS, to foster sustainable building practices through education and example and he received Special Recognition from the United States Green Building Council, Maryland Chapter in 2010 for his works in sustainability. The Green Building Institute is headquartered at the ENVIRO CENTER in Jessup, Maryland. It is a collaborative effort comprised of an internal support staff, a board of directors, an active marketing committee, members, instructors, builders, politicians, students, interns, volunteers and other organizational partners.

As a 501c3 non-profit organization focused on education, outreach and networking, the GBI provides a broad range of green educational classes in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia. The Institute offers onsite corporate training and can host meetings, fundraisers and other events at the ENVIRO CENTER. This facility has adjustable classroom sizes, online access, conference rooms with full A/V equipment and ample free parking.

The GBI is committed to creating a better future for generations to come through the promotion of sound, environmentally friendly building practices. GBI strives toward The Living Building Challenge, "To encourage the creation of living buildings, sites and communities in countries around the world while inspiring, educating and motivating a global audience about the need for fundamental and transformative change."

GBI successfully expanded to more than 100 green education classes in 12 locations in the fall of 2009 and has a schedule in development for the fall of 2010. More advanced level courses are available for HERS (Home Energy Rater) and Passive House Training. Many programs serve the entire community, regardless of socio-economic status and background. The GBI has and will continue to offer education for low income residents by taking courses to community centers, attending county events and fairs and offering courses for free to those interested in volunteering. The Maryland Department of Environment is assisting GBI in the promotion of courses and has also offered financial assistance for certain classes practiced in Maryland.

The GBI is also partnering with educational, business and local government organizations to bring the educational programs to a wider audience and raise awareness of both the need to "green," and our buildings. The dynamic nature of this arrangement allows for the distribution of cutting edge technological information. With the assistance of grants from private foundations and businesses, the Institute is reaching out beyond its membership base to enable those who normally wouldn't attend such programs to attend an introductory class that empowers them to make small, but significant changes in their use of energy.

Thanks to grants from Constellation Energy and The Columbia Foundation, the GBI is striving to offer online courses in the future. A virtual classroom would remove location and access barriers to our green curriculum. To achieve this goal, GBI is planning to install two high quality video cameras in our Jessup classroom to record classes and make them available online.

The GBI features a monthly Green Building networking event in Jessup on the first Tuesday of every month to encourage interaction and exchange among those interested in "going green" and "making green." Social media outlets such as Collective X and facebook are available for online outreach and networking. Go to YouTube and search, "Green Building Institute NBC" and you'll get an excellent tour of the Institute's home at the ENVIRO CENTER. ■

Heather V. Szymanski is director of Marketing & Business Development for the Green Building Institute, a non-profit organization focused on education, outreach and networking. Free networking groups meet on the first Tuesday of every month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in Jessup. Please visit [www.greenbuildinginstitute.org](http://www.greenbuildinginstitute.org) for more information.



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