

It's a Green, Green World

Green Building Conference held Thursday

By Melissa Rigney Baxter

Special to the Freeman

BROOKFIELD – Bradley Spiegel has seen the future, and it's green. Spiegel, a senior at Marquette University was one the attendees and a volunteer at the Green Building Conference that was held Thursday by Hunzinger Construction University and Sustainable Building Solutions. A volunteer with Wisconsin Green Building Alliance, Spiegel said he's hoping to work in a green company after his graduation.

Stephanie Mand, spokesperson for Hunzinger, said the conference has been held for three years. Exhibitors, speakers and case study presentations were all part of the event, which included subcontractors and contractors who work with Hunzinger. Other organizations such as We Energies, Focus on Energy and the Wisconsin Green Building Alliance also participated. The conference is open to all and offers opportunities for students and professionals to learn more about green and sustainable technologies within the building industry.

Elizabeth Hittman, membership and events for the Wisconsin Green Building Alliance, said the trend toward green building practices shows no sign of slowing down. "We were bracing for a membership decline because of the downturn, but we've had a 25 percent increase in membership," Hittman said. From governments to small businesses, Hittman said organizations and builders are increasingly focused on gaining Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Certification for their projects. Even those projects which do not pursue LEED certification often incorporate green, sustainable and energy saving elements, she said.

Sean Currie, business development manager for Focus on Energy, said the organization works with customers who are building or remodeling to make buildings more energy efficient. "We set up an incentive program to help them make those (sustainable) choices," Currie said. The organization works in coordination with local utilities, such as We Energies, to encourage the use of energy-efficient choices, he said.

Phil Vetterkind is the director of Sustainable Building Solutions, a division of Hunzinger Construction which focuses on providing education and training, consulting and energy analyses. "Sustainable design has become more and more accepted," Vetterkind said. "It's almost standard."

The focus on green technologies has created demand for a variety of solutions, for everything from flooring to roofing and everything in between. Dave Hansen of Oconomowoc represents three different companies which provide green technologies including electric charge Mobility LLC, which sells electric vehicle charging systems. There aren't many installations yet, Hansen said. Municipalities, businesses and educational institutions may be among the customers who want to provide vehicle charging on site, he said. From recycled ceiling tiles to rooftop gardens, there were dozens of other options for contractors, students and developers to explore at the conference.