

FOCUS ON GREEN CONSTRUCTION/DESIGN

Valley builder will judge national green-home contest

By JENNIFER TROXELL WOODWARD
Special for Lehigh Valley Business

One green builder is jetting off to California early next month to be a judge of cutting edge energy-efficient homes at the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon.



Brian Baker

Brian Baker, co-owner and director of marketing and design at Studio26 Homes and Renu Building & Energy Solutions in Orefield, was selected to judge at the biannual event which showcases futuristic green homes.

These prototype homes will have a host of special features such as rooftop gardens, reclaimed wood siding, cement panel rain screens, a charging station for an electric bicycle, solar wooden canopy and solar chimney and a living wall or vertical garden to grow food and produce.

"There was a process to get selected. I had to send my resume, and I was selected to review homes for market appeal, since there are different judging categories," Baker said. "These homes are built by teams of 200 university students and then there are architects, engineers, manufacturers and businesses involved in the projects.

"Each home has a demographic or target market that it expects to hit. So, for instance, here is the project, and it is designed for a couple with a household income of \$80,000."

From an unbiased perspective, Baker offered the example of a green home under review that is built on rails and opens up to what is consid-

VELOPMENT GROUP LLC

Studio26 Homes and Renu Building & Energy Solutions

- **What:** Custom, design-build green homes and remodeling.
- **Location:** Orefield.
- **No. of employees:** 7.
- **Websites:** www.studio26homes.com and www.renubuilding.com.

ered a midyard. He acknowledged that he is up to his elbows in blueprints, design and architectural drawings and paperwork for some of the homes he will have to judge.

FAMILY VENTURE

The Energy Solar Decathlon, previously held on the East Coast, is Oct. 3-10 in Orange County, Calif. Two years ago, the event was in Washington, and Baker, who received his master's degree at the University of Maryland, was asked by University of Maryland students to do test verification for a "green" residential prototype that would be reviewed at the 2011 decathlon.

Studio26 and Renu are Orefield-based entities under the green construction umbrella known as Baker Development Group LLC. The company, which churns out several multimillion-dollar projects a year, is family run and privately held.

Baker runs the business with his father Jim Baker, who is president, and his brother Scott Baker, director of operations.

The Bakers established Studio26 in 2004 with diverse skill sets but a mutual interest



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

An award-winning national green-building certified custom house built by Studio26 homes.

in green construction. Jim Baker, a former employee of Bethlehem Steel, had a computer firm in the Lehigh Valley in the 1980s and '90s that employed 400 people.

In contrast, Brian Baker had a background in architecture while his brother Scott initially was in building supplies and later involved in finance.

NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REMODELS

Brian Baker said that at the time the company was conceived, the green movement was not necessarily as mainstream as it is today, but the Bakers were driven to corner the green construction market in the Lehigh Valley. The U.S. Department of Energy was one of the first organizations they chose to partner with, and

from there, things took off.

The company has achieved LEED-certified platinum status and has built several Energy Star qualified homes, a feat that is not easy, Brian Baker said.

"We started Studio26 Homes and got a lot of calls about green construction, and then everything started to unfold from there," Baker said.

According to Baker, Renu Energy was established about five years ago to accommodate customers with existing homes who wanted to remodel with green features. In some cases, they wanted solar energy installed or were redoing their basement, insulating with energy-

please see **BAKER**, page 15



SOME GROWING COMPANIES SEEK A BRIGHTER APPROACH TO CONSTRUCTION.

THEY FIND NORTH STAR.

Insightful planning and design. The experience of 300+ corporate centers, medical facilities, manufacturing plants, commercial buildings and hotels. The unique ability to guarantee pricing before the design is begun. Single source responsibility for the entire project. Look to North Star to bring it all together.

When it's time to grow, North Star is the bright place to start.

PROFESSIONALISM. EXPERIENCE. DEPENDABILITY. VALUE.



NORTH STAR
Construction Management Inc.

SUITE 100 • 7562 PENN DRIVE • ALLENTOWN, PA 18106 • 610.395.7005 • FAX 610.395.8570



INDUSTRIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRACTING

Excavation
Hydro Excavation
Infrastructure:
Install & Maintenance
Erosion Control
Storage Tanks
Site Remediation
Soil Sampling

*Celebrating 20 years
of service to our
customers!*

JMT Environmental Technologies, Inc.
Lehigh Valley, PA **PA28975**

610-837-8000
www.jmtenv.com



**SPECIAL EDITION
MANUFACTURING**

Publication Date: Oct. 21, 2013

For information, call 610-807-9619 x107
or email tomv@lvb.com.

LEHIGH VALLEY **BUSINESS**

FOCUS ON GREEN CONSTRUCTION/DESIGN

OPINION

Suppliers are important in obtaining green status

By **SCOTT STONER**

Special for Lehigh Valley Business

Sustainability is everyone's responsibility – a commitment to sustainable business policies and initiatives that reduce the impact on the environment and improve quality of life not only in the Greater Lehigh Valley, but in every community.

This region is on board with that commitment – making a concerted effort to grow its green portfolio through education and building. And one of the most impactful steps a company can take to identify practical and measurable solutions to help reduce its carbon footprint in the design, construction, operation and maintenance of its facility is to implement a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

LEED is the process of certifying a building as green through independent verification. The LEED rating system was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council to provide a national benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance sustainable buildings.

For a building to become LEED-certified, it must meet prerequisites and achieve specified performance levels to qualify for rating points. These standards provide verification that a building project meets the high-performance standards for green buildings.

LEED certification is recognized nationwide as proof that a building is designed to be environmentally responsible and a healthy place to live and work.

Every supplier a company works with in its quest for LEED certification is critical to success.

Look for a supplier that creates and manufactures storage systems that facilitate new levels of workplace organization, allowing large footprints to be reduced while increasing open space opportunities — both critical LEED criteria. The space savings you can expect from storage also means a reduction in energy require-

LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

- LEED's triple bottom line is people, planet, profit.
- Improving building operation after LEED methodology can save up to 20 percent of energy that is used.
- Following LEED guidelines can reduce the carbon dioxide footprint of the building.
- LEED-required indoor air quality improves the building for occupants with the use of low emitting materials and prohibition of indoor smoking.

ments and overall environmental impact.

One of the easiest ways to earn points toward LEED certification is to update storage capabilities. Installing modular storage cabinets is the first step toward making storage more efficient.

Two cabinets can store the entire contents of five units of standard shelving. That means a company can double storage capacity and free space for more productive and profitable uses. Efficient parts storage can help provide faster service by cutting retrieval time in half.

Additionally, floor space can be optimized with a high-density tower vertical lift system. Fully automated, the system uses an efficient design that minimizes reaching, bending and searching, reducing ergonomic risk to employees at the same time enabling faster part and tool retrieval.

Whether simply considering ways to reduce the carbon footprint or living and working in an environment where sustainability is the norm, daily decisions and lifestyles can help protect natural resources for future generations.

Scott Stoner works for a division of Allentown-based Stanley Vidmar as corporate environmental health and safety director at Stanley Security Solutions in Indianapolis. The Stanley Vidmar website is www.stanleyvidmar.com.

cial ventures, including a recent solar project for an equestrian complex in Wind Gap. Future prospects include working with a couple of area hotels to increase their energy efficiency.

"We were fortunate enough to receive 14 to 15 awards over the last several years," Baker said.

He estimates that someone custom-building a "green" home will spend 5 percent to 15 percent more than what a traditional home would cost. He said that customers want to consume less energy or improve the air quality in their home with the added benefit of reducing their energy bill.

"The customer will spend more, but the idea is that if they ever go to sell the house, it will have an increased value as a LEED-certified home," Baker said.

Another drawback is that the cost of natural gas has plummeted, which reduces the return-on-investment calculations for Inspire.

Prices range from \$8 to \$12 a square foot for the system, not including installation. ATAS has a program to calculate feasibility for a project that has proven very accurate, Misenhimer said.

"No matter how green people are ... it's got to make economic sense," he said.

BAKER

continued from page 14

conscious materials or putting up green siding.

Renu Energy is geared toward these types of remodeling projects. Popular green features include solar panels, insulation, solar photovoltaic electric and trellis work over the top of windows.

GREEN AWARENESS

Baker said many customers are up-and-coming young professionals who were raised with an awareness of green energy.

While the company primarily does residential work, it also occasionally takes on commer-

ATAS

continued from page 12

ATAS plans to reach out more to companies involved in solar electricity and those that finance, design and maintain renewable-energy technology so they can add Inspire to their repertoire.

Excellence in Quality Performance



BeneFITSM Corporate Wellness has been awarded the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Wellness & Health Promotion Accreditation.

With more than two decades of experience, BeneFIT, Valley Preferred's corporate wellness program, has earned a reputation for excellence among employers and brokers seeking to improve employee health and manage health plan costs.

BeneFIT offers a wide range of wellness programs available to all employers, regardless of the company's health insurance provider or plan.

NCQA Accreditation provides a measure of value and assurance for employers and brokers that BeneFIT offers highly valuable wellness and health promotion services.

Make healthier employees a priority for your company! Contact BeneFIT or your broker today.

BeneFITSM
Corporate Wellness

Marketing Material

610-969-0486 1-800-955-6620
benefitcorporatewellness.com