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ELC Receives Prestigious Green Certification

Vero Beach, FL -- The Environmental Learning Center (ELC) recently achieved a Four Green Globe certification for two new buildings that were recently opened on the 64-acre Wabasso Island campus.

“This is the highest certification that the ELC could have received according to the Green Globes green building guidance and assessment program,” explained Holly Dill, Executive Director, Environmental Learning Center. “We are not only grateful to our design, construction and engineering team for their diligent management of this project but also to our many donors who made the new buildings a reality. What really moved us from a Three Globe to a Four Globe award was our major photovoltaic system. We have 60 solar collector panels on the south facing roof of one of the buildings. These generate electricity for our air conditioning, lights, and aquarium filtration system.”

Green Globes® is a revolutionary green building guidance and assessment program that offers an effective, practical and affordable way to advance the overall environmental performance and sustainability of commercial buildings. Essential elements of the Green Globes system include a comprehensive environmental assessment protocol, software tools that speed and simplify online assessment, best practices guidance for green construction and operations, qualified assessors with green building expertise and a rating/certification system.

Proprietary software tools and a ratings/certification system ensures that environmental impacts are comprehensively assessed on a 1,000 point scale in multiple categories including Energy, Indoor Environment, Site, Water, Resources, and Emissions. After achieving a threshold of at least 35% of the total number of 1,000 points, new and existing commercial buildings can be certified for their environmental achievements and sustainability by pursuing Green Globes certification that assigns a rating of one to four globes.

Projects, such as the ELC building, which score high on the Green Globes rating scale, consume fewer fossil fuels, reduce green house emissions, conserve water, reduce other forms of pollution, minimize impact on the land surrounding the building, and offer a better working environment for occupants.

According to an independent third party assessment conducted by Charles Kibert, Ph.D. of Gainesville, FL: “The Environmental Learning Center is a superb example of a high-performance green building and the facility is in keeping with the Center’s mission of teaching about the ecology of southeast Florida.... Accordingly, this project qualifies for four Green Globes. In my opinion the Environmental Learning Center, by virtue of its green attributes, the diligence of the project team, and the score achieved by the project in the Green Globes assessment, fully deserves recognition for this exceptional level of achievement.”

On June 30, 2008, the ELC’s largest building was hit by lightning during a severe evening thunderstorm, causing a fire that destroyed it and a nearby public bathroom facility. On May 1, 2010 the ELC celebrated the re-opening of a new “Discovery Station” and public restrooms. Funds to support the building project were provided through generous donations from ELC members, private individuals, foundations, school groups, and the local business community.

Clemens Bruns Schaub Architect & Associates, with lead architect Michael Ohler, designed the 4,500 sq. ft. facilities. Lead contractor on the project was The Hill Group with Coastal Technology providing on site engineering and John Robbins, PA serving as the utility engineer.

The Environmental Learning Center is located north of Vero Beach off County Road 510 at the end of the Wabasso Bridge. Its 64-acre campus includes exhibit areas, native plant gardens, picnic facilities, gift shop, and visitor center. A list of its many field excursions, including nature walks, canoe excursions, and summer ecology adventures for students can be found at www.DiscoverELC.org.

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Outside photos: Environmental Learning Center Discovery Station and public restrooms.
Interior photos: Environmental Learning Center’s displays including touch tank fish aquarium.

All photos provided by Doug Graybill.