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Omega Center for Sustainable Living Marks 10th Anniversary of Environmental Innovation & Commitment to Climate Action

One of the World's Greenest Buildings Is Now a Growing Hub for Connecting Global & Regional Climate Strategies

RHINEBECK, NY – Today marks 10 years since [Omega Institute](#) unveiled its landmark achievement in green building, the [Omega Center for Sustainable Living \(OCSL\)](#). Internationally recognized, the OCSL was the first building ever to achieve both [LEED® Platinum](#) and [Living Building Challenge™](#) certification—the highest environmental performance standards available. Since it opened in 2009, this state-of-the-art water reclamation facility and environmental education center has reclaimed 45M gallons of wastewater, saved 867K pounds of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere, and hosted tens of thousands of visitors for tours and sustainability education. Omega's continuing commitment to climate action and education remains ambitious.

“Omega understands the consequences of climate change are real, and we are addressing the threat of a warming planet head on,” said Robert “Skip” Backus, chief executive officer at Omega and visionary behind the OCSL. “As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the OCSL, we are proud to be at the forefront of the regenerative design movement, which is redefining how we live in right relationship to natural systems and cycles. Real solutions exist, and we continue to make improvements within our own operations while we educate and engage with our partners and constituents to help reverse climate change.”

Omega Center for Sustainable Living in Action

More than just a building, the OCSL has evolved into an environmental leader, offering programs that teach the regenerative principles modeled by the facility. It serves as a hub for environmental organizations, activists, educators, and students to network and learn through a variety of events and programs such as: conferences, workshops, field trips (K-12, college, and post-graduate) and Omega's [Ecological Literacy Immersion Program \(ELIP\)](#), a 4-week residential certificate curriculum.

In June, OCSL director Laura Weiland was part of a team at the United Nations Climate Conference in Bonn, Germany, that is building worldwide capacity and coordination for climate education, public awareness, engagement, and action. That work will continue in September alongside the UN Climate Action Summit in New York City, and at COP25 in Santiago, Chile. In October, the OCSL will host its second [Drawdown Learn Conference](#) in partnership with Project Drawdown and many others. The conference seeks to integrate a solutions-based approach to climate change into schools, communities, governments, and businesses.

“The OCSL is stepping forward to foster and support a deep understanding of the critical connection between local work and global climate strategy,” Weiland said.

Setting a New Standard

The OCSL is at the heart of Omega's ongoing environmental initiatives and includes a greenhouse, an [Eco Machine™](#), constructed wetlands, and a classroom open year-round to the public.

Designed by Kansas City–based BNIM Architects, the award-winning OCSL still models the leading edge of sustainable design 10 years after its opening. The building supplies all of its own energy needs and its operation is carbon neutral. The self-sustaining facility is heated and cooled using geothermal systems, and utilizes photovoltaic power. To date the OCSL has produced 510K kWh of solar energy, and has used net zero energy from the grid.

“As the first building to be both LEED Platinum and Living Building Challenge certified, the OCSL quickly signaled to the entire design and construction industry the feasibility of this philosophical paradigm shift,” remarked Laura Lesniewski, principal of BNIM Architects. “It is imperative that Omega and design professionals everywhere remain resolute in calling for the breadth and depth of change that is required in our built environment to confront climate change and demonstrate the real possibilities before us.

The core of the building is a 4,500-square-foot greenhouse containing a water filtration system, an element of the Eco Machine, designed by John Todd Ecological Design. This living system uses plants, bacteria, algae, snails, and fungi to recycle Omega's wastewater (approximately 45 million gallons to date) into clean water that is used to restore the aquifer. The system is chemical-free, and creates a closed loop hydrological cycle.

“Something in the Living Building Challenge process itself connects with leaders, rousing a vision that defies risk,” said Amanda Sturgeon, chief executive officer of the International Living Future Institute, which administers the Living Building Challenge. Sturgeon continued, “The leaders behind the Omega Center for Sustainable Living jumped to the challenge at first sight. Now, Omega is a shining light for more than 600 projects that are inspired by what this project proved possible.”

Omega’s commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of its 250-acre Hudson Valley New York, campus includes recycling, composting, and conservation, powering 100% of campus electricity through the purchase of wind and solar power, and supporting sustainable agriculture and local business.

“In a world on the ecological brink – with climate change, water scarcity, and species’ extinction, we need centers like Omega's which are living examples of how to repair the broken water and nutrient cycles,” said Vandana Shiva, a renowned scientist and environmental advocate, the director of the Research Foundation on Science, Technology, and Ecology, and a frequent presenter at Omega.

For more information visit eOmega.org/ocsl, and follow the OCSL on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About the Omega Center for Sustainable Living

Founded in 2009, the Omega Center for Sustainable Living (OCSL) originated as the first green building in America to achieve both LEED® Platinum and Living Building

Challenge™ certification — the highest standards currently available in sustainable architecture. Located at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, in Rhinebeck, New York, the OCSL is an environmental leader, offering programs that teach the regenerative thinking and environmental practices modeled by the building. eOmega.org/OCSL

About Omega Institute for Holistic Studies

Founded in 1977, Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is the nation's most trusted source for wellness and personal growth. As a nonprofit organization, Omega offers diverse and innovative educational experiences that inspire an integrated approach to personal and social change. Located on 250 acres in the beautiful Hudson Valley, Omega welcomes more than 23,000 people to its workshops, conferences, and retreats in Rhinebeck, New York, and at exceptional locations around the world. eOmega.org

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