

## Local News

### New energy store offers green knowledge and products

By Colin Ryan  
Observer correspondent

About four years ago, the general contractor Northeast Construction realized that a key challenge in building environmentally friendly homes was the difficulty of finding energy-efficient products suppliers in northern New England.

Now, the company is poised to solve the problem by launching Building Energy, a green business that offers alternative energy products. Building Energy opened for business last week in Williston and, according to manager Basil Stetson, is in the process of designing an interactive showroom that will demonstrate products – and operate with the eco-friendly mindset on which the company was formed.

“The building will be heated by thermal heat, run on solar power and will have skylights that bring in natural light,” Stetson said. “We anticipate the showroom being a lot of fun – a place where you can come interested in one thing, but learn about others as well.”

The owners of Building Energy hope its temporary showroom will be ready by next month. The store is currently located in the offices of Northeast Construction on South Brownell Road in Williston, and at present does solely contract business.

“One distinction Building Energy has is that we’ll be one of first stores in the country where you can buy a variety of high quality green products under one roof,” said Stetson. “Right now we are offering solar and wind-powered products. And we are lining up other products, such as wood and pellet-fired boilers.”

Northeast Construction has been operating for 27 years. Stetson described Scott Gardner, owner and president of Northeast Construction and Building Energy, as being “at the head of the pack in terms of green building.”

Like it’s new company, Northeast Construction has a strong commitment to energy efficiency and quality building practices – Gardner trained with Efficiency Vermont, an energy efficiency services provider, for “Energy Partner” status from 2002 through 2006. In 2005 the company received an award at the Better Buildings By Design Conference for “one of two tightest houses ever tested in Vermont.” The house, located on Oak Hill Road, was a milestone for Gardner, and confirmed his energy vision as attainable.

“We had been insulating homes for 13 years,” Gardner recounted. “We wanted to find out how good we really could be, and we discovered how successful we could be as well. A house can be both beautiful and efficient – our goal was to show that you could combine the two. An efficient home is comfortable and quiet, there are no drafts, and the temperature is consistent throughout.”

In addition to the Building Energy retail store, which the owners hope will be ready by July or August, the company will perform building energy audits by testing if buildings are airtight and using infrared thermography to analyze building insulation and thermal envelope construction by looking for changes in temperature caused by heat leaks.

“The first step in saving money for the customer is not losing energy in their home,” said Stetson. “We do energy audits – our energy auditors, who are BPI (Building Performance Institute) certified, will find energy leaks by looking at insulation, heating systems and building envelope, and then make recommendations to help you best retrofit your house.”

Stetson, who moved here from Florida, said his passion is starting and running small businesses, and he chalks getting this job up to “serendipity.”

“You get lucky once in a while, where you can make a living, feel good about what you’re doing and know that you’re breaking ground in an important new area. We’re not pushing hardware – we want the customers to have the best solutions. We’re trying to provide good products and good knowledge and a better living environment, and I believe that Building Energy will develop a reputation for expertise in general and be viewed as an energy resource over the long term.



Observer photo by Colin Ryan

Solar engineer Nik Ponzio (left), and Scott Gardner, president and owner of Building Energy, stand in the future location of the store on South Brownell Road while holding plans for the building.