

# Views from **On Top of the World®** Communities

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Beyond Building Green

**OCALA, FLA.** – Environmental awareness is a core belief at On Top of the World Communities and is reflected in the construction of high-performance homes and the company’s stewardship of the world’s resources.

“It is a matter of faith,” says Kenneth Colen, president of On Top of the World. “The country needs to be energy-independent, otherwise we are giving away our future.”

On Top of the World Communities’s commitment to energy-efficient homes began when the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy introduced the ENERGY STAR® program.

On Top of the World embraced this effort immediately, integrating energy-efficient products and building techniques in its homes to ensure long-term energy savings for its home buyers. As a result, On Top of the World Communities became ***Florida’s first active-adult community to receive 100 percent ENERGY STAR qualification*** on all new homes ... quite an achievement considering that just 17 percent of all new homes built in the U.S. carry this designation.

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## GREEN BUILDING – KT – ADD 1

ENERGY STAR home construction includes more than two dozen building products and practices ranging from R-30 insulation in ceilings to low-E, energy-efficient double-pane windows, tight construction and efficient heating-and-cooling equipment.

Every new home at On Top of the World is energy rated by an independent, third-party inspector – paid for by the builder – who conducts onsite inspections before and after drywall is installed. The inspector conducts a blower door test for leaks in the home and another test for leaks in the ductwork.

Test results are used to generate what is called a HERS Index score for the home. The lower the HERS Index, the higher a home's energy-efficiency rating when compared to others built only to local building codes. Home buyers receive the home's confirmed rating with anticipated energy savings for cooling, heating, lighting, hot water and appliances, among other measurements.

A HERS Index rating of 69, for example, means the home is 31 percent more energy efficient than a home built to code, and buying such a home qualifies home buyers for an ***Energy Efficient Mortgage***, while adding to the home's appraised value.

"People don't realize how much energy is consumed in a home," says Colen. "They stand at the pump and watch how much it costs to put gas in their cars, but if they stood in front of their home's electric meter, they'd have a real shock. We strive to build our homes to conserve as much energy as possible ... to save the homeowner money *and* to save the environment."

On Top of the World Communities is Marion County's first builder ***partner with Building America***, a voluntary effort spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Energy to identify the area's best energy-performing new homes to increase demand for high-performance residential construction.

Currently, the community *is pursuing LEED certification* for all homes it builds.

LEED, an international green-building-certification system of the U.S. Green Building Council, recognizes practical and measurable green-building design and construction.

“We didn’t have to change any of our building practices when we applied for LEED certification because we were doing these extra things already as part of the ENERGY STAR and Builder’s Challenge programs,” notes construction manager Sheryl Johnson. “We’re very proud of that fact.”

On Top of the World Communities is among the area’s first home builders to incorporate alternative sources of energy (including solar) as options in new homes. One home in the community’s new model home center – opening in November – is the 2,188-square-foot Huntley II that will feature optional solar panels as a secondary source of energy.

“This is a great opportunity for homeowners to see solar power in action,” Johnson explains. “And from everything we’ve seen and heard, 70 percent of home buyers say they want a high-performance home that is good for the environment.”

The company’s commitment to water-wise landscape practices has earned On Top of the World recognition as **a Florida Friendly Landscape Community**. Water-saving technology and landscape design are practiced throughout the community, not only in common areas, but in homeowners’ yards as well.

While On Top of the World Communities has maintained its focus on quality construction of energy-efficient homes, it also has added environmental protection to the mix. For instance, the company consistently partners with eco-friendly manufacturers that share its commitment to sustainable practices, and it purchases materials locally, cutting down on carbon emissions inherent in moving products long distances.

“All of these efforts together contribute to the betterment of our country by moving us closer to energy independence,” Colen says. “Whether or not to implement these practices is no longer just a philosophical discussion. Building responsibly so people can live better and more efficiently is the key to our future.”

