

One for the Road

Going the extra green mile

By Marimar McNaughton, Staff Writer

Ralph Konrady and his son, Tanner Konrady, are a father-son builder team who share another family trait: they are both long-distance runners.

Tanner finished 86th out of a field of 245 in the Quintiles Wrightsville Beach Marathon last month with a time of 3:52:46. Ralph finished 239th out of 368 in the 2009 Beach2Battleship half Ironman with a time of 6:33:03. Konrady & Son Construction took the lead, helping to sponsor the inaugural Resolution Run, a 5k fun run and Loop walk held in Wrightsville Beach on New Year's Day to benefit WARM, Wilmington Area Rebuilding Ministry. They also regularly donate surplus building materials to the cause.

Tanner said some runners participate for a once in a lifetime endeavor, others are making a lifestyle statement. He said he never ran out of steam during the marathon. Ralph, whose knees wanted to give out during the triathlon, refused to quit. He walked to the finish line. Such extracurricular activities cast the Konradys in the light of role models for a leaner, greener generation of builders.

Whether it's a race to the finish line, or an energy efficient certification they seek, they typically go the extra mile and for more than a year, in between other projects and on weekends, they've exhibited that level of perseverance on a recently completed building project, one that has caught the eye of many who frequent the Wrightsville Avenue corridor.

The house at No. 5507 was nicknamed One for the Road by its designer, Kevin Pfirman, who is minting a reputation for a brand of maritime industrial, site-specific, out-of-the-box architecture atypical of the coastal cottage norm.

Literally wedged into a pie-shaped corner of the landscape, One for the Road is flanked by Pfirman's circa 1950s residence and studio on one side and tract homes on the opposite side. The lot, Pfirman said, was reclaimed from the Greenwood Acres Trailer Park, and is buffered with old growth trees and freshly planted natives.

Those native species and an arrangement of concrete pavers and loose gravel, designed to collect rainwater and stream it—along with plumbed water from an outdoor shower—down the sloped topography of the building site earned the Konradys points toward a Silver LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficient

Design) certification that should become official in the coming weeks.

The new standard green features for homes built along the southeastern North Carolina coast include Energy Star rated appliances, low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) wall paints, and pervious driveways. And like others, most of the materials used to build and finish the house are sourced within a 500-mile radius, another LEED requirement.

What's unique about this house, aside from its contemporary appearance, is the placement of high-efficiency windows to maximize daylighting along the homes' southern exposure.

By anchoring the house with the garage at the street end to buffer the noise, Pfirman was able to mass the 1,400 square foot, three bedroom, two and a half bath house beneath a unified 14-foot ceiling. An open deck at the living end allows the passage of air from west to east.

With the extra two inches that 2x6-inch wall studs provide, there is more wiggle room for electrical, plumbing and R23 insulation. A solar hot water element is eligible for tax credits and combined with a 15 SEER HVAC system should reduce energy costs by as much as 50 percent.

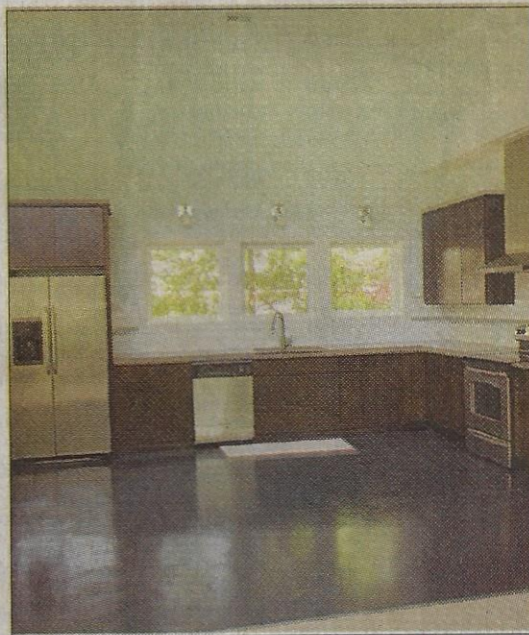
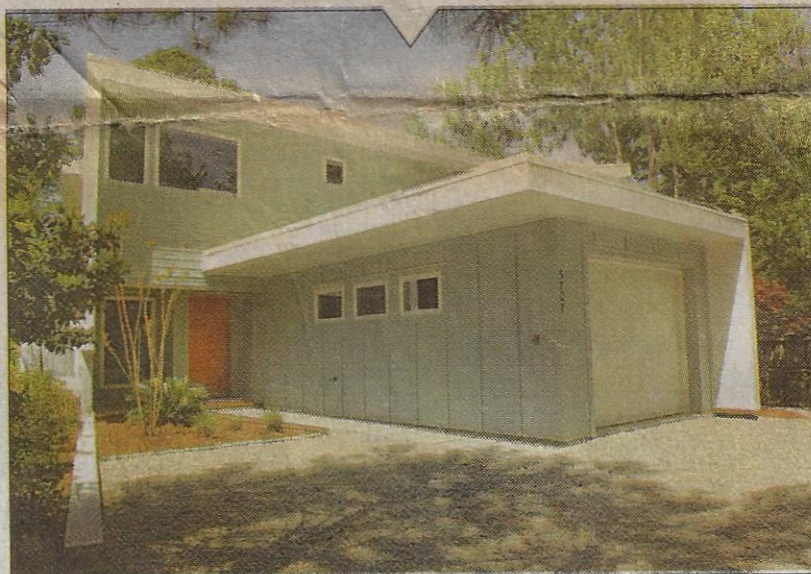
The use of pre-painted metal roofing material for exterior siding and the packing that came with it to construct the outdoor shower was also an energy saver. All factored into points toward the LEED seal of approval.

Two poured concrete slabs, one on grade, one elevated, provides a finish material as well as a thermal barrier. Tanner pointed out that the concrete floor mix had a 30 percent fly ash concentration—recycled silica, alumina and iron powder recovered from coal-fired electric plants—which took longer to set up, but in the end put less pollution into the earth's atmosphere.

Several months after the foundation was poured in place in late 2008, Ralph predicted that this project would be like a schooling clinic for Konrady & Son.

"It's going to be pretty innovative," he said.

Like the long distance runners that built it, One for the Road took its good old time reaching the finish line, definitely not a once-in-a-lifetime endeavor, very much their lifestyle.



Staff photos by Joshua Curry

Daylighting is an interior feature that allows the passage of sunlight throughout the living areas. Low VOC paints prevent off gassing. Both earn points toward LEED certification. The kitchen and living space uses an open floor plan with modern design. The great room living area is extended by a 385 square foot deck covered with 14-foot ceilings.