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Tommy Williams Homes - SAVING ENERGY: It Starts at Home

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Imagine living in a home that creates enough energy to sustain itself – one that would put an end to paying out big bucks for that dreaded monthly utility bill. The “Zero Energy Home” - the home of the future - is on the verge of changing the face of the nation’s housing industry. Longtime builder Tommy Williams, one of Alachua County’s energy-conscious leaders, is the first production builder in the country to take on the challenge, according to national energy experts.

An Alachua County native, Williams grew up on a farm in Archer, and, after obtaining a degree in agriculture, he carried on the family tradition as a farmer for many years. The family’s nurturing of the land – Williams is a fourth generation – works well with the homebuilding industry. As a farmer, he accidentally got the homebuilding ‘bug’ in 1978 while building the family home in Archer, which is where Williams and his wife, Anne, raised three children. “I’ve always heard farmers were really the first environmentalists, and that is so true,” Williams said. “We always took steps to take care of our natural surroundings.”

Williams’ vision to bring energy-efficient homes to the area began years ago at Longleaf Village in southwest Gainesville and at Belmont in the northwest, where his commitment to the Building American Program® resulted in more than 200 of the most energy efficient homes in Florida. For Williams, the next logical step is to set a trend with the Zero Energy Home, one that is designed to completely eliminate your electric bill. To master this challenge, Williams works closely with experts from the U.S. Department of Energy. The DOE’s research and development of cutting edge technology, energy-efficient construction techniques and equipment with renewable energy systems has led to extraordinarily energy efficient homes.

The goal is to help builders create homes that produce as much energy as they consume. Like a typical home, a Zero Energy Home is connected to the local electric company. At times the home draws electricity from the electric company. Other times, when the home makes more electricity than it uses, it rolls the home’s utility meter backward. Over time, the amount of electricity used equals the amount sold back to the utility company. At the end of the month, you get a net zero electric bill.

Aesthetically, the Zero Energy Home will look like other Tommy Williams homes, which feature 10-foot ceilings, a spacious, open floor plan, crown molding and wood floors. The difference lies in the design and construction of the home, along with solar panels and a solar water heater.

“By committing to build a true Zero Energy Home, Williams is demonstrating a singular commitment to improving our environment for our children and grandchildren, not to mention building a home that significantly advances the state-of-the-art in homebuilding,” said Subrato Chandra, PhD, an expert with the Florida Solar Energy Center.

The goal of this futuristic home is to show everyone that they can save money, breathe healthier air, conserve resources and reduce greenhouse effects - affordably. Few people realize that homes are bigger polluters than vehicles. The typical home can cause twice as much greenhouse gases compared to the typical car, according the Environmental Protection Agency.



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commitment to the Zero Energy Home will create a huge impact in Florida and across the country, according to William Haslebacher, a DOE expert. "It will demonstrate to other builders that very energy-efficient homes can be built and marketed in competition with conventional houses. Building America will encourage Zero Energy Home to develop case studies, best practice guides and other tools that help other builders increase the quality and efficiency of their homes," he said.

"Over the past 20 years, we've taken baby steps to build more energy efficient homes. We see a lot of interest in energy-efficient homes from the Y-generation and from baby boomers," Williams said. "We feel it's the right time to take a big step and set a trend in the market. And it's also nice to think our grandchildren and their grandkids will benefit too."

Tiffany Thomas, who lives in a Tommy Williams home in Longleaf Village, was thrilled to move from her smaller home into a larger home and have her utility bill go down. "Basically we liked everything they offered – energy efficiency and all the bells and whistles that go with it. We know we got a great deal on a lot of value, at a great price," Tiffany said. "Longleaf Village is a special place to live because of the hour gym, awesome pool, great location and really top-notch quality construction."

"The goal of Building America is to create energy efficient homes that are affordable for the homebuyer and to ensure that consumers do not end up paying more for energy efficiency. A cost-benefit analysis is conducted to decide on the features and tradeoffs that are necessary to be cost-effective," Haslebacher said.

"The price of the first Zero Energy Home in Longleaf will fall in the \$275,000 to \$300,000 range, after rebates and tax incentives, for a home just over 2,000 square feet. After rebates and tax incentives, the price of the Zero Energy Home will be about the same as an upgrade to granite countertops and wood floors. Granite countertops will never write a check for your electric bill. But these new energy features will pay for those granite countertops," Williams said.

"The homes he builds, Williams' reputation in the industry is based on a solid foundation – a hard work ethic, integrity and honesty – values he and Anne passed on to their children. Ginney, their daughter, a graduate of the Santa Fe College building construction program, is following her father's footsteps as part of the Tommy Williams team. Their son, Wesley, manages the farm in Longleaf, the majority of which is now planted in pine trees, and Emilee is a college student. Ginney is entering the industry at the most opportune time: to take her father's green imprint on the community to a new level with the beginning of the Zero Energy Home – the home of the future.

For more information on the Zero Energy Home or other homes built by Tommy Williams, call 352-331-8180 or visit TommyWilliamsHomes.com.

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