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BRIGHT STUDENTS



Photos by HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

Mechanical engineering student Steve Tominac, left, works with Mark Beever from the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters. "Some of the technology we're applying is economical for homeowners," said Tominac, who graduated in May with an architecture degree.

Solar house to shine at Lawrence Tech

SOUTHFIELD

By LORI HIGGINS
FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

The house sprouting from a large parking lot at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield is small in stature, but it packs a lot of power — solar power, that is.

Students, some of whom recently graduated, have been planning, designing and building this home since early 2006 for the Solar Decathlon competition in October and will open it for the community during two open houses.

The house is an example of how simple it can be to use the sun to generate the power

If you go

Two open houses have been scheduled for the solar-powered home built by students at Lawrence Technological University. They run 4:30 to 8 p.m. Friday and Sept. 21 on LTU's campus, 21000 W. Ten Mile, Southfield.

To learn more about the home, visit www.solar.ltu.edu.

er needed to operate electrical appliances and to heat, cool and light the building, students say.

The sun will heat water in the home through the use of evacuated tubes. Electricity will also come from solar

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Tominac inspects tubes that will be used to heat water in the solar house being built for a national competition.

SOLAR | Lawrence Tech students build contest entry

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panels that cover much of the roof. Batteries will be used when sunlight isn't available.

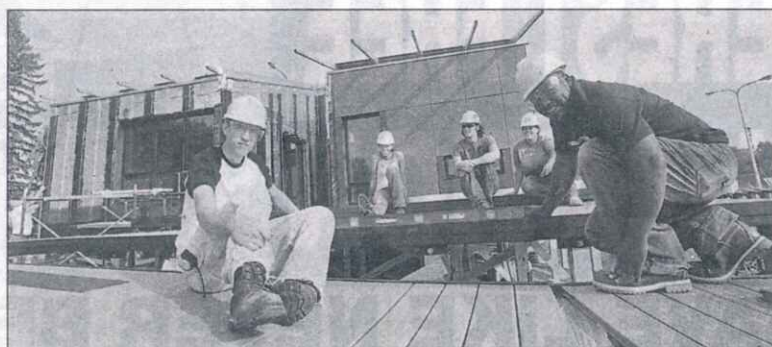
"Everything we're using in the house is available on the market," said Christina Span, 27, of Madison Heights, who graduated from LTU in May with an architecture degree and remains closely involved in the project.

Steve Tominac, 23, of Westland said, "I hope people learn they can actually apply this to their homes. Some of the technology we're applying is economical for homeowners." Tominac is also a May graduate with an architecture degree.

The Lawrence Tech team, which calls itself Team ALOE-TERRA (which means to nourish the Earth), will compete in the Solar Decathlon against other teams from the United States, as well as teams from Germany, Spain, Canada and Puerto Rico, to build the most attractive and energy-efficient homes.

Later this month, the home will be taken apart and shipped to Washington, D.C., for the mid-October competition, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy.

The home measures 800



HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

At work Friday are Steve Tominac, left front, Destin Noa, right front, Christina Span, right rear, Steve Sauer, center rear, and Jody Washington, left rear. The home will be taken apart and shipped to Washington, D.C.

square feet and has a 1,100-square-foot deck. But the living space is only about 620 square feet because of the mechanical equipment inside and the thickness of the walls.

The students say they've designed the home to maximize the use of a Murphy bed in the second bedroom that when in storage allows the room to be used as an office. A courtyard connects the living areas to the master bedroom, bathing the house with light.

"You can live comfortably in a small house," said Steve

Sauer, 23, Lake Orion, a May architecture graduate.

They also paid attention to accessibility. The bathroom is all one big wet room. There will be no separate tub or shower, just a showerhead. Water from the shower head will flow into a drain in the middle of the floor. Span said it was designed so that someone who uses a wheelchair could easily navigate.

Span said teams generally spend between \$500,000 and \$600,000 to complete the project, with the federal energy department giving each team \$100,000. The balance, she

said, comes from donations.

Dozens of students have been involved in the project from the beginning, and a core of about 20 has been actively involved. Professional carpenters are also assisting.

Those involved in the project say it's an opportunity of a lifetime.

Sustainable energy, said Jody Washington, 22, a May architecture graduate from Northville, "is what I want to focus on in my career."

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