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Local Architectural Firm Studies Modular Construction

ALTOONA, PA— Judy Coutts, AIA, Architect, recently completed the “Implementing Modular Construction in Sustainable Projects” workshop, designed to support the American Institute of Architect’s “50to50” goal of reducing energy consumption in buildings by 50% by the year 2050.

Two months later, Coutts supplemented what she learned in the workshop with a tour of Haven Homes’ modular construction plant in Newton, PA. Haven Homes can build its modules to recognized green building standards including Energy Star, LEED for Homes, NAHB Green Builder Program, and EarthCraft House, as well as a variety of regional, state and local certification programs.

Modular construction is sustainable in these ways:

- The modules are constructed at an off-site, climate controlled environment where building materials are protected from the elements, reducing the chance that the construction materials can become wet and moldy;
- The modules are constructed in such a way that the installation of insulation and sealants is better controlled, resulting in reduced energy use; and
- The modules can be built in such a manner that construction waste is reduced and recycled, and “green” products and processes can be incorporated into the modular units.

The Pennsylvania Housing Industry Partnership, the Modular Building Systems Association, and Central PA Workforce Investment Board, and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry sponsored the workshop.

Ms. Coutts has 31 years of experience on architectural projects of varying sizes, from houses to hospitals, from a nuclear and chemical waste handling facility for the National Institutes of Health to satellite earth stations for NORAD. Hers is the first woman-owned architectural firm in Blair County. She has long been interested in modular construction and is gratified that this construction delivery method is finally gaining acceptance in the wider industry.

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