



Life's WORC headquarters earns EPA's Energy Star

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The headquarters of Life's WORC, a private, not-for-profit organization providing comprehensive support for individuals with developmental disabilities, has earned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Energy Star, the national symbol for protecting the environment through superior energy efficiency. This signifies that the organization's headquarters, located at 1501 Franklin Ave., performs in the top 25% of similar facilities nationwide for energy efficiency.

According to the EPA, commercial buildings that earn the Energy Star use an average of 35% less energy than typical buildings and also release 35% less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Life's WORC's improved its energy performance by managing energy strategically across the entire organization and by making cost-effective improvements to its building(s). In doing so, Life's WORC has positively affected the environment by preventing substantial greenhouse gas emissions.

"Improving the energy efficiency of our nation's buildings is critical to protecting our environment," said Jean Lupinacci, chief of the Energy Star Commercial & Industrial Branch. "From the boiler room to the board room, organizations are leading the way by making their buildings more efficient and earning EPA's Energy Star."

Life's WORC, working with Glen Cove, NY-based T.M.Bier & Associates (TMBA), one of the region's leading independent control systems engineering companies which provides comprehensive building automation and control system integration services and solutions including "green" solutions, began its green initiatives in 2005 with the installation of light sensors in all of its offices. Specifically, Life's WORC's lighting retrofit project included a change from T12 fluorescent bulbs with 64 watt usage to T8 fluorescent bulbs with 25 watt usage. This step was completed in the spring of 2008 and was followed by the installation of variable speed drive motors for the building's heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the spring of 2008/09. During that same period, additional light sensors were installed in the building's conference and training rooms.

Life's WORC's green initiative is not stopping with these installations. According to Life's WORC president/CEO Peter Smergut, the organization has future plans for additional energy efficiency measures.

"At this time, we are planning a solar power installation which will enable us to realize a 20% energy savings. TMBA is arranging a Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) rebate of \$70,000 which we will apply against the solar installation cost of \$200,000. On our resulting costs of \$130,000, we expect to achieve a full payback in 11.1 years," said Smergut.

"We are also planning to roll-out our green initiative to our agency homes and program locations where we plan to install an Andover Control System for monitoring electrical, HVAC and safety controls," said Smergut. "Currently, we are considering a home in Hauppauge as a test site for this installation."

As evidence of its complete commitment to preserving the environment and saving energy, Life's

WORC formed a "Going Green Committee" in July 2009. It is comprised of staff from the agency's various departments and programs all dedicated to following guiding principles of energy conservation, agency awareness and the reduction in the use of non-green products. Under the Going Green Committee, Life's WORC has already implemented several important measures. They include: the reusing of interoffice envelopes; promoting double-sided print jobs where possible; ordering supplies manufactured from recycled products; communicating "Going Green" tips of the week to all staff; providing reusable shopping bags imprinted with the agency's logo to all of its homes and program facilities; ordering recycled paper products for the office and not using any Styrofoam products; collecting used batteries and cell phones to ensure proper disposal and/or reuse; developing an information outreach DVD for communicating green messages to the agency staff; distributing "Going Green" ceramic mugs to replace the use of plastic cups in the office; and planning an Earth Day celebration by distributing water thermos made of reusable products with the Life's WORC logo to its staff.

Smergut said, "We will continue to keep the spotlight on our "Going Green" mission by communicating regularly about this initiative with our staff, asking their participating in meetings about our greening of the organization and asking them to be active participants by sharing their ideas on how we can continue to build on this very important program."

Life's WORC (formerly WORC) was co-founded in 1971 by Vicki Schneps whose daughter resided in the Willowbrook State Institution. Following a scathing investigative report by Geraldo Rivera in 1977 which uncovered gross abuses and neglect of the institution's residents, Schneps rallied friends, political contacts and Rivera to help further advance the cause of people with mental retardation. These efforts resulted in the opening of its first group home in Little Neck, Queens in 1977 - the Geraldo Rivera Residence. It would become the first of many others and the impetus behind the expanded services Life's WORC now provides throughout Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Currently, Life's WORC maintains 35 home and 16 non-residential community-based services across the region.

This private 501(c) (3) not-for-profit agency provides comprehensive support for individuals with developmental disabilities including mental retardation and autism. The organization is committed to providing all supports necessary to facilitate the full integration of these individuals into the communities in which they live. The agency operates under the auspices of the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

EPA's Energy Star energy performance scale helps organizations assess how efficiently their buildings use energy relative to similar buildings nationwide. A building that scores a 75 or higher on EPA's 1-100 scale is eligible for the Energy Star. Commercial buildings that can earn the Energy Star include offices, bank branches, financial centers, retail stores, courthouses, hospitals, hotels, K-12 schools, medical offices, supermarkets, dormitories, houses of worship, and warehouses.

Energy Star was introduced by EPA in 1992 as a voluntary, market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency. Today, the Energy Star label can be found on more than 60 different kinds of products, new homes, and commercial and industrial buildings. Products and buildings that have earned the Energy Star prevent greenhouse gas emissions by meeting strict energy-efficiency specifications set by the government. Last year alone, Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved nearly \$17 billion on their energy bills while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those of 30 million vehicles.