

National recognition awarded to building technology students

by: Erica Ryberg

The wave of the future isn't electronics; it's solar hot water, insulated foundations and rainwater catchments, according to Residential Building Technology Director, Tony Grahame.

The students are using cutting-edge technology to build an environmentally responsive and energy efficient house. "I want them to learn to build a house for the 21st century," Grahame said.

In the last two years, houses built by Grahame's students have won several awards from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

This year, on January 13, the NAHB presented YC students with the Energy Value Housing Award. According to a press release, Ken Ford, a NAHB member said it was

the first time that the award has gone to a community college.

In 2004, the program was also a recipient of the NAHB's Green Building Award.

The current project, a 3,200 square foot home on Williamson Valley Road, in Prescott, looks like any other at first glance. On closer inspection, however, the house bristles with features carefully chosen to be cutting edge; features including solar tubes that light closets and low-profile photovoltaic cells on the south-facing roof that will likely work themselves into the mainstream in the coming years.

"I could teach them to build a geodesic dome or straw bale house, but could they get a job doing that?" said Grahame. "Students come through this program and become

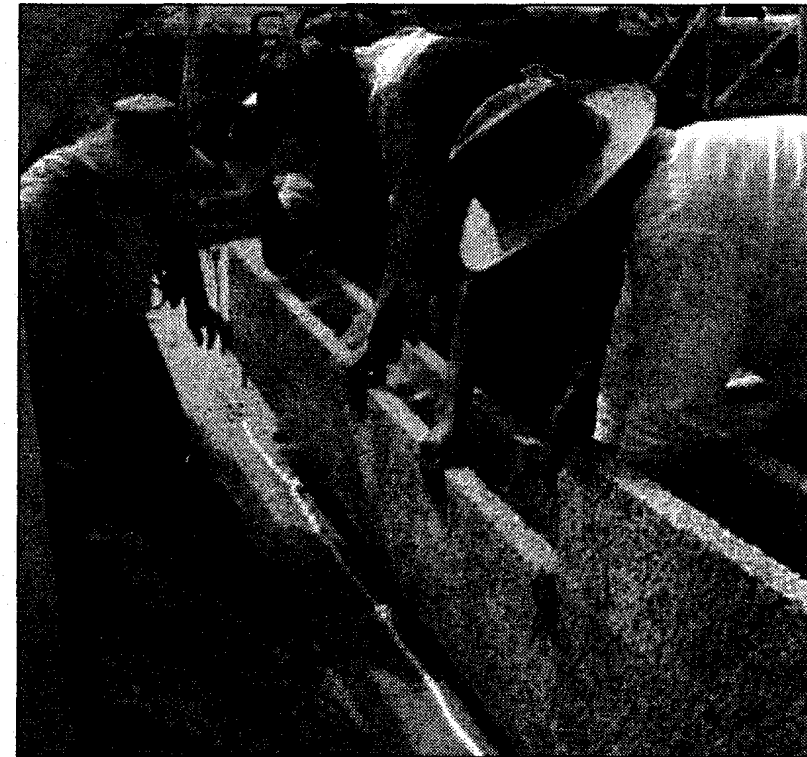
an asset for whoever hires them."

Rich Peterson, a retired project manager, is currently hard at work on the house. "It's been a real eye-opener," he said. "A lot of building science principles get pulled into it."

Peterson is planning to use the skills he's gaining during his 20-hour-per-week labs to build a house of his own.

"The concepts that we're learning here, I'll directly apply them," said Peterson. Plans for his house include photovoltaic solar electricity and grey-water plumbing.

Next year, a Habitat for Humanity construction will challenge Grahame and his students to find ways to build green and energy efficient on a tighter budget.



Residential Building Technology students work on the foundation stem walls of a home on Lupine Lane, in Prescott, which won the National Association of Home Builder's Energy Value Housing and Green Building awards. Photo courtesy of Tony Grahame