

# MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

For more information contact:  
**Catherine Donker, Marketing Director**  
**OMNNI Associates**  
**920-830-6121; 800-571-6677**

## “LOCAL FIRM ADOPTS ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER SCHOOL”

### **OMNNI Associates Provides Time, Expertise and Financial Support for Development of Green Teaching Building**

**Appleton, WI**—While many organizations show their concern for the environment by adopting a local highway or park, OMNNI Associates has entered into a joint-partnership with a local environmental charter school instead. Brian Wayner, an environmental engineer at OMNNI Associates, is leading the way in the development of a Green Teaching Building to house classrooms for the Fox River Academy, an environmental charter school located in the Appleton Area School District. The school focuses on the environmental, historical, cultural, recreational, and economic importance of the Fox River. Students receive instruction integrating all core subject areas using the Fox River and its watershed as an anchor for learning. Tiffany Frerks, Principal of Fox River Academy, states “we are delighted to enter into this partnership with OMNNI Associates and are truly excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.”

Imagine a school building that sits on a site where stormwater is managed using porous pavement, biofilters and rain gardens. Native vegetation provides groundcover. The students monitor energy use and record heating/cooling days. Daylighting and passive solar light illuminate the classrooms during the day; solar panels generate electricity for lighting at night. A geothermal heating and cooling system is connected to radiant flooring. Low flow water fixtures are the norm and recycled slate tiles cover the floor. In the green house, the students nurture plants that will be transplanted into the community garden, area parks and the school grounds. Marisa Gressler, Fox River Academy 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher states “This partnership with OMNNI has enabled our students to experience a classroom that extends beyond four walls. The storm water and GIS projects are just two examples that have resulted from the school – community partnership.”

OMNNI Associates, an engineering, architecture and environmental consulting firm, supports the Green Teaching Building by providing time, donations and professional expertise including assistance on the initial environmental assessment, professional consultation on building code compliance and structural concerns, architectural design for building renovations, GIS training, and the use of trucks and equipment. Staff volunteer their own time with lawn maintenance, marketing and partaking in fundraising efforts such as candy and coffee sales.

“This building will be an educational tool for the children, but I would like to see it go beyond student use,” said Brian Wayner, environmental engineer. “I see a place where students can educate their families on various technologies that can be used in the home, or a place where local contractors can come to review technologies in real-world conditions. And it will be a model for other schools to learn about the benefits of green school buildings.”

Philip Ramlet, President and CEO of OMNNI Associates, commends Brian’s dedication to educating future generations about the environment. “Brian’s vision and goals fit closely with OMNNI’s environmental efforts, which includes providing environmentally-friendly engineering and design where ever possible on our projects,” said Ramlet. “Whether we’re designing green stormwater features for the school or contributing towards the purchase of solar panels, we view this as an ongoing project that will benefit the students, the community and the environment for years to come.”

The building, located at 1205 W. Prospect Avenue, just behind the Jefferson Elementary School is currently in full use and renovations are ongoing. Some of the finished projects include installation of recycled slate flooring, low flow fixtures, recycled tile, permeable sidewalk, rain gardens, rain barrels, native plantings and energy efficient lighting. The next big undertaking for the building will be PV solar panel installations. OMNNI Associates has kicked off the fundraising with a donation of \$1000 towards the project.

**A SIDE NOTE: H.R. 2187, The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act** has been received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and

Pensions. This bill would require the Secretary of Education to make grants to states for the modernization, renovation, or repair of public schools, including early learning facilities and charter schools, to make them safe, healthy, high-performing, and technologically up-to-date.

Founded in 1968, OMNNI Associates is dedicated to providing engineering consulting services to public and private sector clients. Headquartered in Appleton, Wisconsin, the firm's services include engineering, architecture, environmental and planning services.

For further information, contact: Catherine Donker, Marketing Director  
OMNNI Associates, Inc.  
One Systems Drive  
Appleton, WI 54914-1654  
Phone (920) 735-6900, 800-571-6677  
[cathy.donker@omni.com](mailto:cathy.donker@omni.com)

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