



New greenhouse focuses interest in sustainability

Community members from campus and beyond gathered in October for the dedication of the new greenhouse on the Marlboro campus, located across the road from Persons Auditorium. The 700-square-foot, wood-and-glass structure is the culmination of three years of planning and community labor, and stands to be the focal point for students and faculty engaged in farming, renewable resources and other aspects of sustainable living.

“Some people who have contributed to the greenhouse are interested in agriculture, while others are involved with architecture or sustainable building, so there are a lot of different motivations,” said chemistry professor Todd Smith, who has been instrumental in keeping the project moving forward. “I certainly think a lot of people support the greenhouse, and farm, as a kind of demonstration of the college community’s interest in sustainability.”

The greenhouse structure is made mostly of local or recycled materials, including local black locust and white oak timbers, pine siding and insulated glass recycled from Persons Auditorium. The design features a steep, glass roof facing south, a north wall built into the ground and a round entryway on the north side that doubles as a community meeting space.

Students have long recognized the need for a greenhouse to connect the farm to the college, as a way to extend the growing season into the fall and spring when the college is in session. There have been two other greenhouses at this same site before, student-designed hoop houses that proved insufficient to survive the Vermont winters.

After students advocated for a sturdier structure, the design for this greenhouse was devised by student Kenton Card ’10, working with fellow students, staff and faculty, as part of his final Plan of Concentration. Kenny began milling local wood for the structure and collecting stones

The greenhouse building crew included
(top row) Evan Sachs ’13, Eric Dennis ’14, Philip Johansson, Aaron Evan-Browning ’12, Ashley Bies ’05, Michael McIvor ’14,
(bottom row) Michael Schneeweis ’14, Max Foldeak, Dan Cotter, Don Capponcelli, Todd Smith and many others.

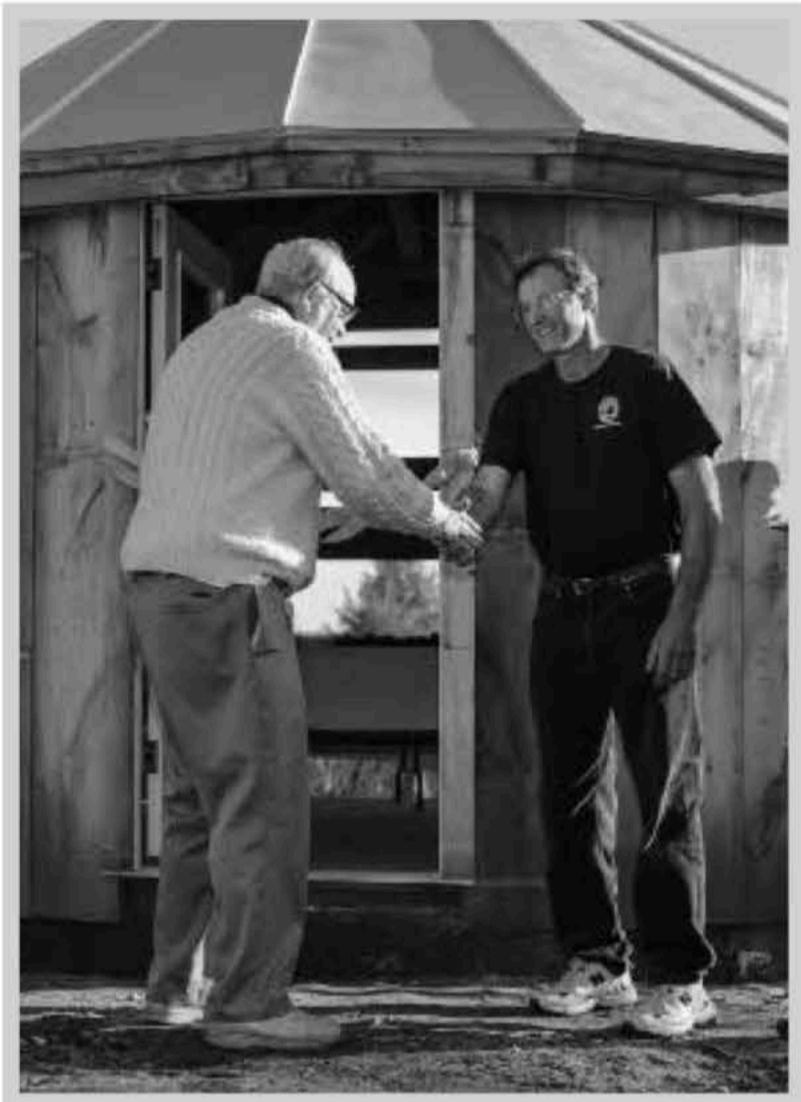
Photo by
 Dianna Noyes

Opposite: The new greenhouse looks out over Marlboro’s organic garden, across the road from Persons Auditorium.

Photo by Tobias Gelston

WINTER 2013 • Potash Hill

23



Above: Greenhouse supporter David White and Marlboro carpenter Don Capponcelli.

Photo by Tobias Gelston

Opposite: Students Maddie Holm, Clair Trail, Mason Jones, Stella Madrid, Max Hatfield, Aidan Keeva and Kara Hamilton view Chinese environmental issues from the inside.

Photo by Jim Tober

for the foundation and retaining walls that year, and the structure has steadily grown since then with the help of other community members.

"Kenny was interested in architecture, but also in how communities use spaces," said Todd. "So he was very interested in how the greenhouse might serve to enhance activity at the farm and bring other community members down to the farm to get involved."

"A lot of people don't know where the farm is. I've run into this pretty frequently," said sophomore Simeon Farwell-Miller, the current farm manager. "I think that visibility has been a problem in the past, but with the construction of the greenhouse the farm will be much more apparent. And we're planning to plant flowers and medicinal herbs and other attractive things in front of the greenhouse, which should make it even more eye-catching."

The greenhouse dedication comes at a time when awareness of local foods and other sustainable practices is growing on campus. The dining hall, under the dedicated guidance of general manager Richie Brown, is increasingly buying its raw ingredients from local or organic sources. The Environmental Quality Committee is stepping up efforts to recycle and compost, and the Food Committee is working with the community to eliminate the use of disposable cups. The farm, benefitting from its first summer with two fully paid managers, has supplied fresh food to both the coffee shop and the dining hall.

A key rationale for the greenhouse has been to draw more faculty and students to use the farm as a class resource for teaching or research. Todd Smith, for example, has based his General Chemistry Lab on the production of biofuels, growing sunflowers on the farm to collect the seeds, extract the oil and manufacture fuel. Other applications could range from growing experiments to farm poetry.

The official ribbon-cutting at the dedication was performed by Don Capponcelli, college carpenter, whose work was instrumental in the greenhouse's completion and who has been a tireless advocate for the project. Present at the dedication were Bob Allen, president of the



Anthropology professor Carol Hendrickson hosted a four-week visit this fall from her friend and colleague Ana Gloria Ajzac Tetzagüic, who works with women's groups in Guatemala on a range of projects, from microfinancing to gender rights. Gloria spoke with Carol's Food and Culture class, participated in the

World Studies Colloquium, interacted with Spanish language students and enjoyed being part of campus life. Photo by Dianna Noyes

Windham Foundation, and neighbor David White, both of whom generously supported the greenhouse project. Other supporters, not able to be present, include Charles J. and Susan J. Snyder, Dr. Suzanne Olbricht and Jon A. Souder '73. Kenny was enthusiastically present at the celebration via Skype from Germany, where he was attending a graduate program in architecture.

Marlboro takes environmental studies to China

"It's easy to forget how small the earth is when at Marlboro, where the air is clear and the trees are tall," said writing professor Kyhl Lyndgaard. "Being in China made us aware of how pervasive human influence can be."

Kyhl was one of seven faculty and ten students who traveled to China for three weeks last summer to explore dimensions of environmental and social issues there. This was the last in a series of fruitful visits to Asia, including China, Japan, Vietnam and Cambodia, supported by two generous grants from the Freeman Foundation. The trip followed a seminar last spring called China's Environmental Challenges, which laid the theoretical groundwork and practical background for the visit.

"The preparatory seminar helped us calibrate our expectations, but nothing prepared me for what we saw," said economics professor Jim Tober, who has a special interest in environmental economics and policy. "One can read about rates of growth, construction booms, consumerism and so on, and still be totally taken aback by cities of 10 million, like Harbin, that seem to be materializing before our very eyes."

Grant Li, professor of Chinese language, and Seth Harter, professor of Asian studies and history, were instrumental in making the trip rewarding through their logistical footwork and relevant knowledge. The group arrived in Beijing, a city of 20 million, and visited many of the nearby attractions, such as the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and the Great Wall. But they also spent time meeting with local environmental agencies, activists and researchers, from the People's University Legal Clinic for Pollution Victims to the Zhalong Crane Nature Reserve. At Heilongjiang University, in Harbin, they were joined by eight students of English, who acted as guides and translators and gave Marlboro students the opportunity to have home visits and other outings.

A highlight for Kyhl was the chance to reconnect with Chinese colleagues he had met when they were visiting scholars at University of Nevada, Reno. The reunion prompted a lively discussion at Beijing International Studies University, one of several opportunities for Marlboro students to talk about environmental issues on campuses in China.

