



# AECP and CAFÉ<sup>2</sup>: An Energizing Partnership

by Karen Adams

When energy conservationist Billy Weitzenfeld and sustainable-building architect Gregg Lewis first crossed paths several years ago, each respected the other's concern for the environment and for the future. Now the two have joined forces to provide energy solutions for homeowners of all kinds throughout the area, and to improve the environment as well.

Weitzenfeld, executive director of the Association of Energy Conservation Professionals (AECP) in Floyd, has spent the past 25 years helping low-income people weatherize their homes, supporting clean energy and green-building initiatives and educating the public about energy conservation and alternatives. He also has organized the annual Green Living and Energy Expo in Roanoke, the largest event of its kind in the area, designed to show visitors how to "save energy, save money, save our natural resources and save the environment." Now with the help of Lewis' new Community Alliance for Energy Efficiency (CAFÉ<sup>2</sup>), a division of Christiansburg-based Community Housing Partners, both organizations can serve an ever-growing audience.

Lewis became familiar in Roanoke as the organizer of the Cradle to Cradle design competition in 2004, which invited architects to create

environmentally sustainable home designs. This year, Lewis turned his career in a new direction to lead the brand-new Community Alliance for Energy Efficiency, a pilot program supported by the U.S. Department of Energy to help middle-income homeowners improve their homes' efficiency to save money, conserve energy and protect the environment. "I had been thinking about how my work can affect the future," says Lewis. The father of two, he says his purpose began to shift when his first child was born 11 years ago. "As a parent, I'm trying to make the world a better place."

The relationship with the association is a natural one, he says, as he and Weitzenfeld have been "walking the same path" for many years. "Billy has been talking this up for a good part of his adult life," Lewis says. "It didn't make sense to reinvent the wheel, so we wanted to build on the 'wheel' he had developed through all those years."

Lewis explained that, while the lower-income population has free services available, middle-income homeowners who wish to upgrade their homes but do not qualify for government assistance often are left behind because the process seems too complicated and expensive. "Folks get overwhelmed by the thought that updating their homes will be overly complicated," Lewis says. "Our purpose is to facilitate that process and point people in the right direction."

Lewis' agency gives homeowners a complete diagnostic energy assessment of their homes at a cost that varies from approximately \$250 to \$500, depending on home size and complexity. Once the assessment identifies ways to improve energy efficiency, the organization provides a list of certified, experienced "green" contractors that homeowners can contact to get the work done. The program also identifies available financial incentives, such as grants, rebates and tax credits, to offset costs. After completion, an alliance inspector returns to assess the work to ensure its quality and efficacy.



**Gregg Lewis and Billy Weitzenfeld**

Both Weitzenfeld and Lewis say that it's about more than just insulating attics to lower heat bills. A big part of making important changes in the home, and ultimately in the environment, is educating people about what they can do to make a difference. That's where AECF has been instrumental, Lewis says, because so much of its mission is education. During outreach events for schools and other organizations, CAFÉ<sup>2</sup> began inviting Weitzenfeld to speak about energy issues, and now he is a regular part of the program. As Lewis describes it, "Billy explains the 'why'

of energy efficiency, and I explain the 'how.'" Likewise, Lewis is on the AECF board of directors, and now helps plan its annual Green Living and Energy Expo.

Whether the issue is cutting home-energy costs, improving air quality, preserving natural resources or seeking clean, green energy alternatives for everyday use, the two organizations together aim to make a difference today—and tomorrow.

"I have three grandchildren, and I think about them all the time," Weitzenfeld says. "What kind of world are we creating and leaving for our kids and grandkids? That should be everybody's motivation."

The Association for Energy Conservation Professionals (AECF) is located at The Jacksonville Center, 220 Parkway Lane, in Floyd. For more information, call 540-745-2838, email [aecf@swva.net](mailto:aecf@swva.net) or visit [AECFES.org](http://AECFES.org). The Community Alliance for Energy Efficiency (CAFÉ<sup>2</sup>) is located in Roanoke. For more information, call 540-382-2002 or visit [cafe2.org](http://cafe2.org).

The 12th Annual Green Living and Energy Expo will be held at the Roanoke Civic Center on Friday, November 4, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturday, November 5, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Expo will feature exhibits, demonstrations and seminars on energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, green building and sustainable living. For more information, visit [AECFES.org](http://AECFES.org).



**Wholesome, Natural, Family Raised Food**



- Pasture raised, all natural Beef, Pork, Chicken and Turkey.
- The best pasture raised eggs in the world.
- Home smoked BBQ on Saturdays.
- Local Honey, Coffee, Fruits and veggies and more!

**Healthy Farm Fresh Eggs From Happy Hens are here!**

Open 10am–6pm  
Wednesday–Saturday  
(April 1st – Christmas Eve)

3263 Floyd Highway North, Floyd, VA

**540-745-4000**

[SweetProvidenceFarm.com](http://SweetProvidenceFarm.com)

Real local ~  
Real good!

Now the **BEST** tasting ice cream is made in Floyd.



10% off with this coupon.

**Store hours:**  
Mon.-Thurs. 11am – 9pm  
Fri.-Sat. 11am – 10pm  
Sundays 11am – 8pm

540-745-CREM  
(2736)

302 S. LOCUS ST. • SUITE 3 • FLOYD, VA  
(Located beside the Floyd Country Store)