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Eco broker expects big things from USGBC's New Hampshire chapter

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As the Seacoast's first-ever certified "Green" Realtor, Hillary Gaynor knows a little something about green construction. Over the years, she's brokered dozens of deals for real estate clients based on the merits and features of green homes and properties throughout the region.

But as the newly elected vice chair of the U.S. Green Building Council's New Hampshire chapter (USGBCNH), Gaynor is gaining experience in a sector whose growth and vitality is inextricably linked with her own.

"From the get go, I wanted to connect with an organization that had a similar mindset and perspective on a lot of the things that I care about," said Gaynor, who received her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy from UNH and worked in the field for years before switching to realty full time. "Now, I'm trying to expand that to include other like-minded organizations throughout the state."

Founded in 1993, the USGBC is a non-profit trade organization tasked with promoting sustainability in how buildings are designed, built, and operated.

The organization's Granite State chapter was created in 2009, with Gaynor as one of its founding members. Since then, the USGBCNH has grown to include 91 members from a variety of industry sectors.

Gaynor says she first got involved with the group - prior to its official chapter certification - after being designated an accredited professional by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Right away, she was inspired by the burgeoning group's efforts to bring green building practices and issues directly to the fore.

"I felt like the organization jived really well with my own personal beliefs in wanting to help promote green issues, and green building issues in particular," said Gaynor. "It's really a great group of like-minded professionals and businesses, and offered a great opportunity to gain experience and learn about what's going on as far as green building issues were concerned."

While builders, architects, and engineers represent a majority of the organization's ranks, Gaynor remains the chapter's sole residential real estate broker. Needless to say, it's an exclusivity Gaynor hopes to help remedy in her next term as vice chair.

"Our goal for the next year will be to bring in individuals and organizations that you might not immediately think would be related to green building," Gaynor notes. "But we feel that almost anyone can benefit from the knowledge and expertise that we as an organization are trying to promote."

Gaynor says her primary goal for 2012 will be to grow the group's membership, bringing into the fold businesses owners and community members from a variety of fields, disciplines, and perspectives. To achieve this, Gaynor intends to conduct community events designed to raise not only her own

organization's profile and cause, but those of like-minded organizations throughout the region as well.

Good thing that, on top of being the chapter's vice chair, Gaynor also serves as chair of the membership committee.

"It works out perfectly, because the goals of the organization work so well with those of the membership committee - really they're one and the same," she says.

To that end, events like Green Eggs - a monthly gathering featuring a new guest presenter for each - as well as their planned summer event at the Children's Museum of New Hampshire, itself a LEED certified building, are becoming more and more the norm.

With a busy real estate practice and two little ones at home, you'd expect Gaynor to have her USGBC duties squarely on the back burner. To the contrary, Gaynor has taken great pride in finding time to promote ideals and practices she feels will come to define green building in the Granite State.

She was also one of the first businesses to join Green Alliance, the Portsmouth-based green business union that has since grown to include nearly 100 local, sustainability-oriented businesses.

"We want to give people a glimpse into what makes green buildings truly green, by showing them the actual builders and the people who made these projects what they are," she said. "At the end of the day, it's all about education, and about how important it is that these practices and standards continue to grow and thrive here in New Hampshire."

As one of the few states mostly spared from the worst wrath of the lingering recession, New Hampshire's green pastures - particularly in the building and construction trades - should be grounds for optimism.

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