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Healthy Buildings 2009 Kicks Off in Downtown Syracuse

The Ninth International Healthy Buildings Conference Opening Ceremony was held Sunday, September 13, at the John H. Mulroy Civic Center in downtown Syracuse. This conference of the International Society for Indoor Air Quality and Climate (ISIAQ) is being hosted by the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems with industry leaders hailing from 45 different countries around the world in attendance. The excitement of the conference was well portrayed by the festivities of Sunday night's ceremony as the conference delegates, as well as local, national, and world leaders, performance artists, and Central New York residents, were at the Civic Center to kick-off the five day conference.

The agenda for the evening featured such notable speakers as Rick Fedrizzi of the USGBC, Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor, Kwok Wai Tham, President of ISIAQ, and United States Congressman Dan Maffei. Chief Jake Edwards of the Haudenosaunee peoples native to Central Upstate New York opened the conference by reciting the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, emphasizing that, "Now our minds are one."

Grammy-award winning recording artist Joanne Shenandoah, of the Iroquois Confederacy, followed with a stunning performance accompanied by her sister and daughter. Her lyrics asked, "Will your footprint in the sand be the only mark you leave? What will be your legacy?" prompting the audience to think about their impact on the world we live in.

Ed Reinfurt of NYSTAR expressed the urgency of designing green. "Here we find our flagship for the future of what we are trying to do with green buildings. We all have lofty goals- there are those for 2030, 2050, and later, but I ask you - what's the progress for 2010 and 2011? No other generation of the world's citizens have agreed we are going to try to leave behind something better," he said. Kwok Wai Tham supported this comment, saying that, "this requires a truly interdisciplinary approach [to the problems we face]."

Delegates at the conference were on the same page as those given the opportunity to take the world stage at the Opening Ceremony. Dr. László Kajtár, Associate Professor in the Department of Building Service at the Technical University in Budapest, has presented and attended past Healthy Buildings Conferences in other parts of the world and looks forward to the conference every three years as an opportunity to link to contacts in other nations so that his students may supplement their educations by travelling overseas.

Another delegate from Belgium was very excited about the parallel sessions throughout the conference focusing on indoor air quality. She said, "In Belgium we have green ambulances. These green ambulances visit homes when a doctor thinks there may be a problem with the indoor air quality of the building. They then run a diagnosis of the building to attempt to determine what made the person sick." Whether delegates are searching for solutions to support their businesses, or simply attending to learn more about the research surrounding indoor environmental quality, there is something for everyone at Healthy Buildings 2009.

"Every aspect of the conference is fascinating to me because almost everything on the agenda strongly supports the whole idea of green building. When you start looking at that, I could pull something useful out of anything I attended. I think our entire society is moving forward in that direction," said Rick Fedrizzi of the various programs at the conference.

Another popular feature of the conference will be the SyracuseCoE Opportunity Exchange (OppEx) at HB2009 located in the Nicholas J. Pirro Convention Center at Oncenter, which features a number of activities and more than 85 exhibits from across the clean and green technology industry. Thanks to the resources of HB2009's sponsors, admission to OppEx is complimentary. For more information on how you can attend the conference or the SyracuseCoE OppEx, please visit the Healthy Buildings 2009 website at www.hb2009.org.

-Nicolette Feldser, Ashley McGraw Architects, P.C., HBGround

Syracuse Center of Excellence (syracusecoe.org) is a collaborative organization of more than 200 businesses and institutions that creates innovations for sustainable built and urban environments. SyracuseCoE members work on research, development, and educational projects relating to clean and renewable energy, indoor environmental quality, and water resources.