

Voice of the Certifier: Pieter Opperman

By Carole Hawkins

Decades ago, in his native country of South Africa, Pieter Opperman and his wife bought a home that was built on a dyke. Within three months a damp rose from the ground and began crawling up the sides.

“The walls were literally crumbling,” he said.

It was his first lesson in the value of sustainability.

Today Opperman is a green building consultant and certifying agent for the Florida Green Building Coalition. His Sarasota-based company, All Star Energy, performs energy and green building audits, inspections, and certifications of homes throughout Southwest Florida.

Opperman often educates builders on the importance of green construction. Environmentally-conscious homeowners are already on board and are pushing the industry in that direction. So are governments.

“Every time a hurricane comes through and destroys 10,000 homes, it’s the government that has to subsidize the rebuilding of them,” Opperman said.

Opperman studied civil engineering in college, but spent his early career days in IT, designing systems to automate business processes. After three decades of it, he found he was tired of how much he travelled for work.

“I decided I didn’t want to see another airport. Ever,” he said.

He read an article about how the government offered rebates for energy efficient homes, and he wondered what it would take to get them. The government’s program never panned out, but curiosity led Opperman to FGBC and to go into business as a green building consultant. The work appealed to his interest in designing systems for better performance and efficiency.

“A sustainable house is a better house, and it doesn’t cost any more to build it that way,” Opperman said.

That was in 2012. Some of his proudest contributions since then have been working with a homeowner in the Keys who built their house on stilts, covered their roof with solar-panel shingles, and recycled their grey water.

All Star Energy also worked from day one as a certifier for Babcock Ranch, which the BBC has described as “Florida’s first hurricane-proof town.”

Perhaps the most rewarding part of Opperman’s career, though, has been the people he gets to work with.

“The community of certifying agents is a very close-knit and cooperative group,” he said. “I’ve learned a lot from them and I hope I’ve been able to contribute something too.”