



**Jerry Gonzales and Pat Lawrence pour concrete into the wall panel system using a line pipe during the construction of an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient home in Escondido.**

JOHN KOSTER | For the North County Times

# GOING FOR THE PLATINUM

‘Slab party’ held last month at eco-minded dream home

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**Editor’s Note:** Rhonda and Nigel Farrar are building an Escondido home that incorporates the latest environmentally friendly technologies. This is the third installment in an occasional series about the Farrars’ construction of their “green” home.

ESCONDIDO — For most of the past two years, Rhonda Farrar and her husband, Nigel, have planned for what they call their “dream green home.” As mid-2010 approaches, that talk and planning is rapidly turning into reality.

Construction is proceeding so smoothly that the home’s target completion date of year’s end looks increasingly likely, Rhonda Farrar said. Now that the construction phase has commenced, visible milestones are easy to see.

On May 23, the Farrars held a “slab party” and open house at the site of their 3,000-square-foot, 4-bedroom home overlooking Lake Hodges.

Last week, contractors started installing the outside walls, made of Insulating

Concrete Form blocks.

The ICF blocks are stronger, resist heat better and provide better sound-proofing than traditional stick-frame construction, Rhonda Farrar said.

“They look like giant Legos, very lightweight,” she said. The hollow blocks are 4 inches thick and are made from 85 percent recycled polystyrene and concrete. Once they’re in place, the blocks are filled with reinforcing metal rebar, and the interior filled with concrete.

“The end result is, you get a 12-foot-thick concrete wall, which is seven times stronger than stick-frame construction, four times more heat-insulative, and 10 times more sound-insulative,” Farrar said. It’s also mold- and termite-proof.

The block material adds 5 percent to the cost of a home, Farrar said, but it quickly pays for itself in reduced maintenance and air conditioning expenses.

And an environmental bonus may be in the works: Because of the technologies the Farrars have chosen for their home, they’re applying to certify it as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green

Building. They’re shooting for Platinum certification, the highest accolade for environmental construction.

While LEED is mostly used for commercial construction, such as Sony Electronic’s new Gold-certified headquarters in Rancho Bernardo, there’s also a residential category.

The certification, provided by the U.S. Green Building Council, tallies a number of factors involved in the building’s construction and operation.

“They do all kinds of reviews and checkups along the way,” Farrar said. “It’s a point system, and you have to prove every single point. The insulated concrete block walls, and the geothermal heat pump and the solar (electricity system) give us a huge number of points towards our LEED rating.

“There’s not many Platinum LEED homes out there, and this looks likely to be one of them,” Farrar said.

Those interested can follow the house’s construction at [www.farrargreenhome.org](http://www.farrargreenhome.org).

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