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Company builds homes to stand test of time

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IOLA -- If Millennium Masonry is a "green" company, it's green like a tank.

For six years, the Iola-based construction company has specialized in building homes and businesses using "insulating concrete forms" -- often called ICFs -- that boast a shelf-life that can span centuries. The result, says business owner Julian Wierzchowski, is a building whose chief ecological strength is its strength.

"We're going to build houses that are going to last up to 500 years," says Wierzchowski. "There is a green aspect that nobody even thinks about: How much we're saving on the construction in the future."

According to the Wierzchowski, the 28 structures the company has built in Wisconsin can hold their own in a tornado, but the more impressive feat might be what the homes do for calmer winds. Wierzchowski says that the superior insulating found in ICF-based homes on energy bills, shows very little hot or cold air is lost due to leakage.

Alan Huffman, whose home in Galloway was built by the Wierzchowskis, says he pays less than half of what he did on winter heating bills in his previous home, even though his new home is about three times larger.

Additionally, says the Wierzchowski, the insulated concrete forms, which consist of foam, honeycomb-like building blocks that are filled with concrete, don't pose the problem of "off-gassing" often found in wood-based homes, where airborne toxins are gradually released into the home years after a structure has been built.

Aside from its superior insulation and its durability, the building process produces almost no waste - a benefit that might strike Julian Wierzchowski as a bit ironic, considering he got his start in the construction business as the kid who threw away the unusable scrap from construction sites. Such scrap doesn't exist when Millennium Masonry builds the shell of a home because almost all of its material, mostly ICFs and steel, can be recycled.

And since Wierzchowski's company specializes in building the basic shell of a home, homeowners are free to include any "green" technology, from solar hydronic heating to photovoltaic power systems. Millennium Masonry endeavors to begin the home-building process with a strong first step.

"It's a real no brainer when it comes to the common sense of the construction method," says Wierzchowski. "It's the wave of the future."