

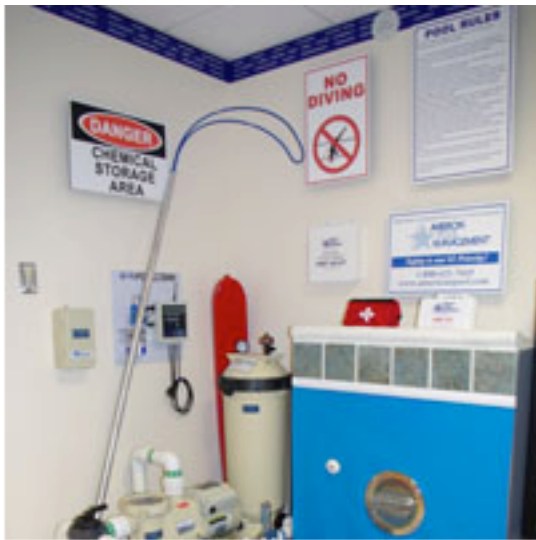
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Planned Cos. Celebrates New O.R.A.C.L.E Facility

By Debra Hazel



O.R.A.C.L.E

PARSIPPANY, NJ-From mock-ups of guard gates to laptops from online learning, the O.R.A.C.L.E. Real Estate Service and Professional Development Center, which opened at Planned Cos.' corporate headquarters at 150 Smith Road here, is dedicated to training and sustainability, officials said.

The training center was more than two years in the making, said Robert Francis, president and CEO of Planned, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "It's been a long time coming," Francis said. "This has been a labor of love. Today is just the beginning."

Francis noted that O.R.A.C.L.E. stands for the company's virtues: Owned by the students, Responsible to the environment, Actively seeking a better way, Client centered in results, Limitless in possibility, and Excelling at being the best. The goal, he said, was to empower the workforce with state of the art training. "This is going to be a center that will continue to raise the bar," Francis said.

The delay was caused by continually expanding the scope of the project, said Graceann Welsh, director of education and development for The Wentworth Group, the holding company of Planned Companies. Originally scheduled for 11 workstations, the completed center includes 16 stations offering hands-on training for all aspects of managing commercial and residential developments. These include a green cleaning and maintenance station, pool station, concierge/front desk station and residential security gatehouse station. Students download an mp3 recording that describes each of the stations, not unlike museum tours.

"Our managers can put their hands on something that they normally couldn't do," such as the interior of equipment, she says.

Also included are 20 work bays with laptops to access Planned's online School of Professional Development, which launched its 45-hour Property Management 101 course today, as well. The online course includes 35 hour-long lessons as well as several three-hour blocks which are completed in a classroom at the training center.

The school, begun in June 2009, offers more than 3,000 courses, including lessons on Microsoft Office, business communications and leadership.

The facility itself is sustainable, Welsh says, with the display items recycled from properties and low VOC paint.

“Parsippany is making great strides in reducing our carbon footprint,” said Parsippany Mayor James R. Barberio, one of a number of officials attending the grand opening. “Green buildings that are LEED certified are definitely the wave of the future.”

“This is an opportunity to take our managers and support them, to train and educate them to manage the property better,” said Michael A. Mendillo, president of Wentworth Group, “You will not find another center like this for community association property management.”