



A Story of Stone Soup

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Let me tell you a story of stone soup. You know, the fable where a drifter shows up with a stone and a pot, fills it with water just outside of town, then sighs and remarks that the soup would be so much better with carrots. A townspeople is gleeful that they have carrots and they go get them and add them to the soup. "Sigh, this would be so much better with some meat"...enter another townspeople, eager to contribute. My husband thinks this is a scam - the guy shows up with nothing and cons meat and veggies out of the townspeople. But I prefer the opposite perspective and the one the story is meant to convey. The drifter shares the soup with the whole town at the end, and together they have made something delicious and much better than the individual ingredients could ever be on their own. His contribution to the soup was the pot, the idea and the management of the inputs.

SUNY Oswego built a very beautiful and LEED Gold for Homes rated residence hall named "The Villages." The project is exciting as there was exceptional integration of all of the team players throughout the process and this integration has greatly attributed to the project's overall success. Some players included: DASNY (Dormitory Authority, State of New York), SUNY Oswego residence Life and Campus Planning, Students of the college, Klepper Hahn and Hyatt, Pathfinder Engineers, Ashley-McGraw Architects, Hueber Breuer construction Inc, and many others.

I see [SUNY Oswego Villages](#) as a stone soup project and a very good example of collaborative design and construction. I won't go into all the inputs, and I want to be clear that there were significant contributions from the contractors, the structural engineer, mechanical engineers, architecture firm, suppliers, campus staff and students. The key for this project was student involvement up-front in the work at hand. The campus: thrilled. The students: finding this a perfect transition between living under the parental wings and taking their own flight.

Very early on, the RAs and other student leaders helped to generate interest and involvement from key students at the college. There were five focus groups dealing with aspects of student life and each generated their concepts about what would make a great new residence hall for SUNY Oswego, and each group then met a couple of times with the architects and engineers. Tough to do as architects work by day and students have classes filling their days. Some ideas were great - no student wanted a centralized laundry, and this was kind of a surprise to the designers, but readily able to be accommodated. Most wanted disposals in the sink, but after researching maintenance issues and discussing the lack of sustainability (food in the water system means more processing) with the designers they were perfectly ok with no disposals. Gathering places were a must - and very well appointed which keeps residents proud of their homes. To continue this awareness of their environment in their new homes, Barnes & Noble donated "the Green Book" to each unit, with facts and tips about greening daily living choices. Sustainability is a false intent if the spaces, controls and amenities don't work for or support the needs of the users of the building. Stone soup is just that - until you add the carrots.

To see USGBC's project profile on the SUNY Oswego Townhouses, click [here](#).



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