‘Seeds of Change’ planted in Costa Rican jungle

Architect David Andersen strives to innovate global ecology through architecture

BY WILL HOWERMAN
SUN PRESS & NEWS INTERN

Today, sustainability is essential to all development and architect David Lee Andersen, formerly of Corcoran, knows that better than anyone.

A true global citizen, Andersen has created architectural designs for large-scale projects all around the world. From Vietnam to Guyana, and from Canada all the way to Nigeria, Andersen’s worldly vision knows no bounds.

During his 30-year career, he has executed projects in 18 countries. Andersen revealed that his vocation transcends just the architectural blueprints.

“I always invest my time and energy in whatever I work on,” he said. “It’s about so much more than the work I do as an architect.”

Before launching his own architectural firm, Andersen by Design LLC, he compiled an incredible résumé, including serving as president of the Ronald McDonald House Children’s Charities, Chairman of the SAGE Academy board of directors, and much more.

His most recent architectural conquest is a laboratory and campus in the cloud forest at the base of the Rincon de la Vieja volcano in Northern Costa Rica. However, this project hits closer to home than one may think.

A Wayzata based non-profit group, Seeds of Change, Inc., is developing the lab. Their objective is to integrate the study of science in unique and stimulating settings for high-school students. Sophomores and juniors are given the opportunity to engage with real research projects with scientists in Costa Rica, through this program.

They study concepts such as the chemical byproducts of leaf cutter ants and genome sequencing. Students tackle extremely rigorous content, given their age.

Andersen describes that this setting is an ideal habitat for scientific study.

“The location is related to the proximity to the forest area being studied — and specifically where there’s a high concentration of leaf cutter ants. Secondly, it’s a ridge that peaks out of the forest — the location presents views of the forest and volcanoes.”

So far, schools have sent students from Wayzata, Mound, and Forest Lake and more to engage with science in this hands-on environment. Andersen said that number is growing.

“I hope that the program will continue to grow and include more...”

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The globe has extra meaning to architect David Lee Andersen, as he has designed projects around the world. His latest effort is designing a sustainable lab and campus in the Costa Rican jungle. (Photo by Cindy Kim Photography)
Innovating global ecology

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high schools from the state of Minnesota as well as a number of schools from out of state that have expressed interest,” he said.

Although Andersen is not at liberty to reveal which new University is currently exploring collaboration with the new lab, it has already attracted the likes of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Currie Lab and the University of Costa Rica School of Medicine.

Andersen also said, “The new facilities will dramatically increase the capacity of the program, allowing even more Minnesotan high school students to join the ranks of budding scientists who will help shape our future.”

Andersen summarized the incredibly rewarding shape that his career has taken.

“When your purpose and passion are roommates, it’s a pretty good deal. I’ve been fortunate to have a job and be in a position to do something. It’s not just about putting solar panels on everything you create, it’s really about your mindset.”

Learn more about Seeds of Change and its mission at seedsforeducation.org

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This aerial rendering shows a laboratory and campus in the cloud forest at the base of the Rincon de la Vieja volcano in Northern Costa Rica. Architect David Andersen, formerly of Corcoran, designed the project.