

*"Before the accident, I was a writer, speaker, and CEO. Now, I write, speak, and am a CEO with a greater purpose."*

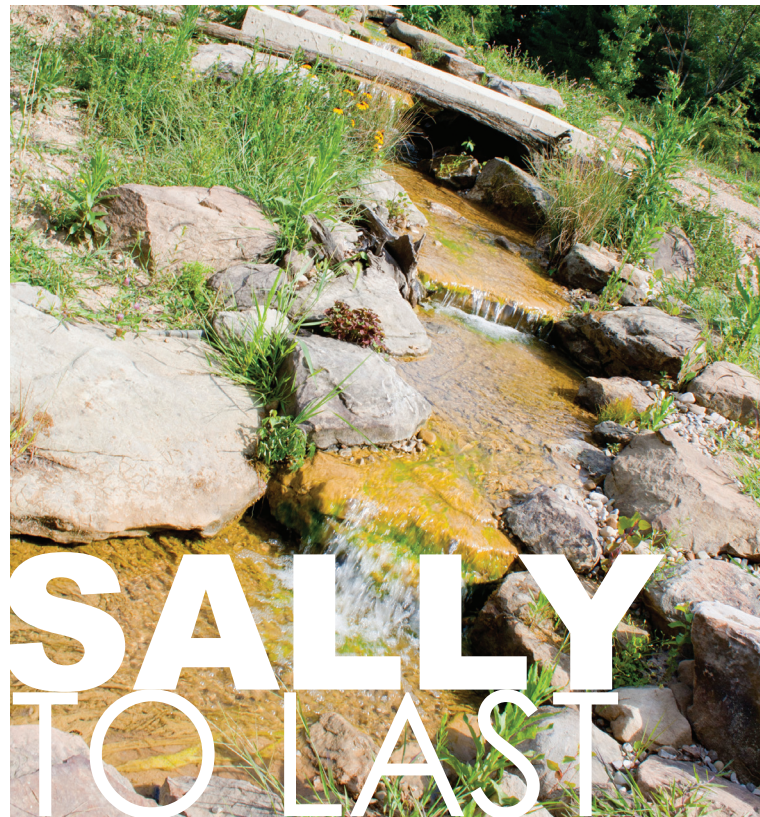
# ROSEMARIE ROSSETTI

The LED light bulbs in Dr. Rosemarie Rossetti's house have a life expectancy of 50,000 hours. The fireplace, two stories tall, is recycled concrete painted to look like stone. Irrigation for the yard, once it's complete, will come from an underground 500-gallon rain harvesting system.

"Nothing like this has ever been done before," she proclaimed, giving a tour of not only a national demonstration project also but her home in Jefferson Township in metropolitan Columbus. The house is a labor of love for her and her husband Mark Leder. It has required seven years of planning, two years of construction, and more than 172 corporate sponsors to get to its present form. What makes the house truly remarkable—aside from the breathtaking open design, the beautiful backyard waterfall and the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired architecture—is its accessibility. "The idea is universal design," she said, "A house you can live in when you're young or old or have a disability. You never have to remodel it."

The ease of movement in the house is amazing. There are no carpets for wheelchairs to snag on, no narrow hallways for canes or walkers to struggle through. The outlets are higher and the light switches are lower than in a traditional home. "The house is about an integration of features that serve abled and disabled people," Rossetti said.

*Photography by Rashunda Holloway*



# UNIVERSALLY BUILT TO LAST

*“The features for the wheelchair users are not a tacked-on after-thought, but part of the original plan.”*

**By William Hallal**

“A home is not truly sustainable unless it is accessible,” this has been the tagline of Rossetti’s home-building project, which has received national attention and has elevated her as a leading authority on universal design. She and Mark, have taken up the cause of universal design and wed it to the burgeoning green movement.

The result is beautiful and environmentally sound. It’s been said before, but Rossetti is the perfect person to head this project. A Columbus native, she obtained a Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in agricultural education. In 1998, a cycling accident left her paralyzed from the waist down. Rossetti always had “perseverance and drive,” her husband

said, but the accident pushed those characteristics out in full force. Recovering at home, she read an article about a usable kitchen for a woman in a wheelchair, and the rest is “herstory.”

Rossetti has not let anything interfere with her passions. “Before the accident, I was a writer, speaker, and CEO,” Rossetti said.

“Now, I write, speak, and am a CEO with a greater purpose.” In addition to being recognized as a leading advocate for universal design, Rossetti has contributed to 11 books and has published a collection of motivational essays, “Take Back Your Life!” I have to read my own articles sometimes,” she joked. But when

it comes to motivation, she practices what she preaches. “I live it,” she said.

The highlight of her public speaking career came in June 2009 at the international Million Dollar Round Table Annual Meeting in Indianapolis. She spoke to a crowd of 5,000 people from 80 countries with 12 language translators about the benefits of disability insurance.

As she left the stage to thunderous applause, former middleweight boxing champion Sugar Ray Leonard took the stage to deliver the next speech. “That Rosemarie,” he said, “She’s a fighter.”

## ■ Mentoring

“Get them involved with life and integrate them into their world and where they want to be. Helping mentees see their vision and believing in themselves is critically important in the success of any mentoring relationship.”