Olive Garden in Arkansas Receives LEED Silver Certification

New restaurant is first casual dining eatery in U.S. to receive LEED certification

ORLANDO, Fla., June 8, 2010 /PRNewswire via COMTEX News Network/ -- The Olive Garden restaurant in Jonesboro, Ark. has recently been officially awarded Silver certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for New Construction (NC) from the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

The 7,500-square-foot restaurant, which opened in January, features a number of sustainable design elements, including:

- **Recycled Building Materials:** Supplies such as sheetrock, doors and windows are made from recycled content. The flooring features carpet squares made from 100 percent recycled materials.
- **Increased Use of Natural Light:** Incorporating more windows more frequently into the building's exterior reduces the need for artificial light.
- **Energy Efficient Equipment and Fixtures:** Energy and water usage is reduced by incorporating items such as Energy Star-rated equipment and low-flow water nozzles in the kitchen and low-flow faucets in the restrooms. New LED parking lot light bulbs and low wattage energy efficient light bulbs use less energy and are replaced less often. Heat recovery tanks allow the capture of heat generated from the freezer/cooler compressors to aid in supplemental heating of hot water to reduce the energy required to heat water and prolong the life of the equipment.

"This restaurant is an example of our ongoing commitment to sustainability," said Dave Pickens, President of Olive Garden. "We're working throughout Darden to be more environmentally aware and to make our business more sustainable. By doing so, we can ensure our long-term success while protecting and enhancing the communities where we do business."

This is the first of 10 restaurants that parent company Darden Restaurants is designing to meet LEED standards. The effort is part of Darden's Sustainable Restaurant Design initiative, which is part of the company's broader sustainability efforts aimed at limiting business impact on the environment, while also enhancing the operational efficiency of its restaurants. Darden aims to reduce energy and water use in its 1,800 restaurants by 15 percent by the year 2015.

ABOUT OLIVE GARDEN

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with more than 700 restaurants, more than 85,000 employees and $3 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest company-owned and operated full-service restaurant company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's Web site at www.olivegarden.com.

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