

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Lehigh Construction Group's Restoration of Historic Buffalo Church Honored as Best in N.Y. State**

*Firm to Receive "Build New York Award" at Gala Event Nov. 2  
at Once-Crumbling Church Saved From Demolition by Singer Ani DiFranco*

*Construction of Frank Lloyd Wright-Designed Boathouse Next for Lehigh*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – October 31, 2006 – Lehigh Construction Group's \$10 million renovation of a once-crumbling, 130-year-old church in Buffalo into a multi-purpose performing and visual arts center has been named the state's top historic restoration project for 2006.

The General Building Contractors of New York State will honor Lehigh at its annual statewide "Build New York Awards" gala on Thursday, Nov. 2.

What's more, the event will actually take place at "The Church," restored by Lehigh over a six-year period after being saved from imminent demolition by singer Ani DiFranco and her Righteous Babe Records managing partner, Scot Fisher. The former Delaware Asbury Methodist Church, built in 1876, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We are honored to receive this prestigious award from our peers in the construction business across the state right here in Buffalo in this restored jewel," said Lehigh President David Knauss. "We thank Ani and Scott for this opportunity, as well as all of the members of the team that overcame tremendous challenges with this project."

In 2000, DiFranco and Fisher approached Lehigh about forming a design-build team to restore the deteriorating church on prestigious Delaware Avenue in downtown Buffalo. Lehigh had completed historic renovation projects before, notably at nearby Westminster Presbyterian Church on Delaware Avenue and the Roycroft Inn, a project for which Lehigh won another Build New York award in 1996.

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“The journey to complete the church restoration was long and had many roadblocks,” Fisher said in support of Lehigh’s award submittal. “Right from the beginning, Lehigh understood our expectations and worked fervently to assist us in overcoming our challenges.

“Lehigh exceeded our expectations when it came to project management and construction expertise. Their continual communication and commitment to quality craftsmanship is remarkable and made the church the showpiece it is today,” Fisher said.

“The Church” now features a performance/concert hall, in what was the main sanctuary, seating up to 1,200 people. The hall can also be used for banquets, accommodating 400 people for dinner, the configuration being used for the Nov. 2 Build New York Awards gala.

In addition, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center is sharing the building and is operating a large gallery, dual-purpose screening/small performance space, and offices. Righteous Babe Records is making its headquarters in the building.

The three-phase project involved extensive structural repairs to both the interior and exterior. Lehigh worked closely with Scot Fisher and the two architectural consultants on the project, Architectural Resources and Flynn Battaglia Architects, as well as several engineering firms. Lehigh assembled a construction project team of hand-picked subcontractors for mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection work, as well as architectural trades, such as for plastering and art glass restoration, with whom Lehigh had worked on other projects.

Among the highlights:

- ◆ Stabilization, reconstruction, and restoration of the exterior began in 2003. This included installing a new slate roof and repointing the crumbling masonry of the 185-foot-high north tower using traditionally trained steeplejacks. The shorter south tower’s top 45 feet of stone was also completely disassembled and reconstructed.
- ◆ Lehigh installed thirty 350-foot-deep wells outside the church to create a geothermal heating and air conditioning system, solving the problem of having to locate unsightly mechanical equipment outside the building – a historic preservation concern. The Church is the first commercial space in Buffalo to use such a system.
- ◆ In spring 2004, the entire sanctuary and narthex basement floor was lowered 16 inches to in effect raise the ceiling. This made the space usable for Hallwalls and to accommodate electrical and mechanical systems. The perimeter walls were underpinned to support the structure while hundreds of tons of sand was excavated.
- ◆ A new exterior stair tower encased in steel and glass was built on the south side of the building to allow entry directly into the core of the building without compromising the interior structure. The 3,000-pound bell in the north tower was reinstalled.
- ◆ The entire interior was renovated in the final phase, including ceiling replastering, painting, repairs to woodwork, and rebuilding of chandeliers.

“Our team at Lehigh became very personally involved in the project, demonstrating great dedication far exceeding our contractual requirements,” Knauss said, noting the work of Project Manager Martin Knauss and Project Superintendent Dave Duffet, a Lehigh restoration specialist. “There were many occasions when they checked on roof leaks in the middle of the night, among other efforts.”

Lehigh spent about 100,000 man hours on the project, with no lost-time injuries or accidents, despite some of the challenges presented by dealing with such a massive, old structure. Lehigh will also receive a Safety Excellence Award from the General Building Contractors on Nov. 2, the sixth year since 1998 the firm has been recognized.

With its successful completion of The Church, Lehigh has established itself as the preferred general contractor in Western New York for challenging historic preservation projects. For example, Lehigh was recently named the general contractor for the West Side Rowing Club’s \$5.4 million Frank Lloyd Wright-designed boathouse on the Black Rock Channel. Lehigh’s other historic building projects:

- ◆ **Hellenic Orthodox Church of the Annunciation** – \$1.3 million project in 2003 to restore the 1907-built Delaware Avenue church after a damaging fire. The project included removal and rebuilding of the floor and refurbishing of all pews.
- ◆ **The Buffalo Seminary** – \$4 million renovation of the private girls school built in 1908 on Bidwell Parkway. Project completed in 2003.
- ◆ **The Buffalo Club** – \$4 million renovations/new fitness center in 2003 for the elegant 1870 building on Delaware Avenue.
- ◆ **Westminster Presbyterian Church** – \$700,000 sanctuary renovation project in 1994, including demolition of a balcony, in the 1854-built Delaware Avenue church.
- ◆ **Roycroft Inn** – \$8 million restoration of the inn on Elbert Hubbard’s Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, birthplace of the Arts & Crafts movement in the United States. The project won a Build New York Award in 1996.

Lehigh has completed many other diverse types of construction projects, including a \$15 million 236,000-square-foot manufacturing building for Graphic Controls, the largest new manufacturing building built in Buffalo in 75 years, and a \$3.8 million expansion of Westwood Bristol-Myers Squibb’s Pharmaceutical Research Center in Buffalo, completed in 2001.

Founded in 1984, Lehigh Construction Group is a leading general contractor in Western New York and a preferred firm for construction projects requiring the highest degrees of expertise and project management. Lehigh’s work has been recognized with numerous awards in the construction industry, including for an outstanding safety record. Lehigh also provides additional building solutions through divisions dedicated to construction maintenance and service, custom home construction, and information technology. Lehigh is based in Orchard Park, N.Y., near Buffalo, and also has offices in Charleston, S.C. For more information on Lehigh, visit [www.lehighone.com](http://www.lehighone.com).