

# Going Green's a family affair

by Allison Ballard



“Cape Fear’s Going Green,” a community guide to all things green and eco-friendly, is the brainchild and responsibility of editor Valerie Robertson.

*photo by Dana Hawley*

Back in high school, Valerie Robertson became interested in ecology and the environment. She studied solar energy in the 1970s. She has a long-time commitment to green living and has kept up with those issues over the years. From the time she moved to Wilmington in 1994 to the early years of the new millennium, though, she noticed a change.

“Every day when walking my dog through the neighborhood, I would hear people talking about things like tankless water heaters, and solar panels, and what could they do about storm-water runoff,” she says. As someone who also has a long history in publishing – through working as an editor, technical writer and co-founder of a publishing company – she believed she could help share this information. “People wanted to know about options that could save money, contribute to more healthful living for their family, and be kinder to the planet. But there was no central information source for such products and services in the Cape Fear area – so I started one.”

“Cape Fear’s Going Green” is a free quarterly community guide to eco-friendly activities, products, and services in Cape Fear, and covers everything from transportation to organic food and gardening. “We profile local individuals, groups, businesses, and events to show the variety of innovative projects our neighbors are pursuing,” Robertson says. The online version includes what she calls the first green calendar in the area.




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ABOVE LEFT: Mary Robertson, Valerie’s sister, does much of the editing for “Cape Fear’s Going Green” from her home in Oregon.

ABOVE RIGHT: Valerie Robertson, left, and her mother Adeline Robertson are both 2010 YWCA Women of Achievement award winners.

*photos by Dana Hawley*

Although Robertson had the vision for this publication and serves as its editor, she puts the magazine together with some help from her family. Robertson works with her mother, Adeline Robertson, at her company, Choice Caregivers. The company maintains a pool of about 40 certified nursing assistants who provide in-home health care assistance, and Valerie does the marketing and computer work. That day job allowed Valerie the stability and flexibility to start “Cape Fear’s Going Green,” she says. Adeline also reviews articles and brainstorms content ideas. Valerie’s sister Mary, who is based in Oregon, writes for the magazine and does the lion’s share of the editing.

“My sister, Mary, plays a key role in making sure the quality of the publication is something we’re all proud to have our name on,” Robertson says. “I was lucky to be born into a family of smart, creative, inquisitive, entrepreneurial people who

love to read and who champion lifelong learning. We’re all supportive of each other’s projects, business or personal.”

Robertson’s brother subsidized the printing of an early issue and her father (who has just written his first mystery novel) suggests marketing ideas and houses Robertson when she travels to Washington, D.C. for the Solar Decathlon. “At family reunions we don’t talk sports or politics: we brainstorm about each other’s projects,” she says.

The family’s efforts and collaboration are paying off. Both Valerie and Adeline received YWCA Women of Achievement awards last year (in the environmental and business categories, respectively) and “Cape Fear’s Going Green” celebrates its fourth anniversary in 2011. A celebration is in the works for March.

For an online version of the paper, visit [www.goinggreenpublications.com](http://www.goinggreenpublications.com). ♦

