

Research Center Fuels Energy Conservation Efforts

People use energy resources everyday, but many underestimate the importance of conservation.

Through research, development of new technologies and educating businesses, the Energy Efficiency and Reliability Center at Purdue University Calumet strives to reduce energy costs and maximize value. An overriding goal is to contribute to attracting out-of-state workers to Indiana and retaining current employees in the state.

“We’re looking at advances in energy efficiency, reliability, utilization, processes and technologies that improve the value and effectiveness of energy use,” comments Robert Kramer, Ph.D., director of the research center. “We’re also looking at reducing energy costs for users, thereby enhancing economic and strategic viability of manufacturing and other businesses.”

One current undertaking relates to advanced thermal storage systems. Another revolves around dealing with large industrial loads.

“We are working with steel mills to conduct research to help them improve their energy utilization,” Kramer explains. The research center also is working on a renewable resource project that involves “producing hydrogen from biomass. Then we’ll use that in a fuel cell to produce electricity.”

Members of the business community have a direct role in the research center’s work. Area businesses, for example, are represented on the research center’s industrial advisory board.

“We’re getting input for our research direction from the communities and businesses,” Kramer notes.

Resource: Robert Kramer, Ph.D., at (219) 989-2147 or e-mail: kramerro@calumet.purdue.edu

Order Up: Entrepreneurial Students Establish Restaurants

The Southern Indiana Small Business Development Center’s Youth Entrepreneur Success (YES) program provides annual hands-on, entrepreneurial training to students between the ages of 11 and 15. The 2004 three-day class included 49 participants.

Students worked in teams to start a restaurant in a food court. Volunteer presenters offered advice for entrepreneurial success in several areas, including: building a business strategy, financial planning, marketing and team building.

“Many of the lessons use activities to really bring the message home,” remarks Dawn Bennett, program manager at the Southern Indiana Chamber of Commerce. “The whole program is completely competitive, but they (the students) all get along.”

In 2004, Ivy Tech State College provided free audio-visual equipment for groups to record a 30-second commercial about their business. Participants also received a CD containing each commercial.

The student-run restaurants opened at Ivy Tech State College in Sellersburg as the three-day program neared completion. Local restaurants donated food that parents, staff and Chamber members purchased from students.

Over the last six years, 270 students have participated. The cost of the program is just \$49. Businesses also award scholarships to help pay for registration.

Resource: Dawn Bennett at (812) 945-0266 or www.sicc.org



Shedding Light on Dark Fiber Potential

InfoComm Systems and Thomas P. Miller and Associates are helping communities to discover undervalued assets and explore ways to capitalize on dark fiber infrastructure, a catalyst for economic development.

James Goldman is executive vice president of InfoComm Systems, Inc., located in the Purdue Research Park. He founded Purdue University’s telecommunications and networking technology degree program.

He describes dark fiber as “fiber optic cable that is already installed or buried in the ground, going between points. In this case, probably between cities in Indiana.

“The dark fiber is information infrastructure as opposed to electrical infrastructure or water infrastructure,” Goldman explains. “It’s just an enabler – it in and of itself doesn’t really cause economic development and therefore needs to be tied into an economic development strategy.”

According to Goldman, most of the dark fiber InfoComm Systems finds is through “word of mouth,” often through vendors. He adds that finding dark fiber also requires “a little bit of detective work at first.”

Goldman says that communities use dark fiber as “a marketing tool” in achieving an industrial park designation. In addition, InfoComm Systems and Thomas P. Miller and Associates’ role in increasing Scottsburg’s Internet bandwidth persuaded companies not to relocate for improved telecommunications opportunities.

“Really what we’re trying to do is enable communities throughout the state to put in the necessary infrastructure that they need to attract the kind of high-tech jobs to really stop the Indiana brain drain,” Goldman theorizes. “If we want to be able to offer high-tech jobs to keep our children here, that’s what we’re going to have to do.”

Resource: InfoComm Systems at www.infocommsystems.net

Compiled by Symone Salisbury

Institute Furthers International Business

Established in 2004, the Institute for Global Enterprise in Indiana cultivates international business opportunities in southern Indiana. It is funded by a Lilly Endowment grant.

According to Victoria Jones, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Global Enterprise, “the two constituents are the university itself and the business community.”

She adds that the institute works with the university to “offer programs that give our students experience in international business so that they are qualified when they go to the workforce.”

The institute’s office is located at the University of Evansville. Many collaborators of the institute also work closely with the university’s Harlaxton campus in Grantham, England.

Among resources for executives are workshops and seminars,

referrals and opportunities to work with interns. Students take advantage of experiential learning, internships and scholarships. For professors, research support, international training and global visiting faculty are available.

“International business is a very quickly changing field,” asserts Jones. “For our students to develop relationships,” she emphasizes, “to develop supply and distribution partnerships in joint ventures or in export (for example), they need to understand other ways of thinking about business, the way their partners will be thinking about business.”

Resource: Victoria Jones, Ph.D., at (812) 479-2455 or e-mail: globalindiana@evansville.edu

Health Provider Promotes Weight Loss

Arnett Health Plans is encouraging members to lose weight and improve physical fitness.

Initiated in January 2004 in partnership with Newtowne Health and Fitness, the Winning Weighs Program provides personalized meal plans, exercise facilities, classes and pharmaceutical vitamins. Arnett HMO members in Tippecanoe and surrounding counties are eligible for the 18-month program.

Arnett pays all fees for individuals who lose 20% of their original body weight and more than half of expenses for remaining participants.

“In the first eight months of the Winning Weighs Program, we had 504 members contact the health plan. Of those 504, 362 were actually enrolled in the program,” relays Nicole Baker, Arnett Health Plans communications coordinator.

Last summer, 96 people lost a combined total of more than 1,020 pounds in three months.

Baker attributes the program’s success to close interaction between the Winning Weighs coordinator and participants. She also applauds “the sense of camaraderie” the program fosters.

Resource: Nicole Baker at bakern@arnett.com

Electric Cooperatives Become New Source for Videoconferencing

Several electric cooperatives are providing customers in Indiana and Illinois with a new source of power: an opportunity to save money.

Businesses can use videoconferencing equipment at the following sites: Jasper County REMC in Rensselaer, United REMC in Markle, Wabash Valley Power Association in Indianapolis and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield, Illinois.

“There’s a lot of potential for it,” declares Stephanie Johnson, customer service representative at Jasper County REMC.

Working with the Wabash Valley Power Association, the Jasper County REMC plans to launch a program that will use videoconferencing to enhance communication between students in two Indiana cities.

“Our goal right now is to have a cultural exchange between a second-grade classroom in Rensselaer and a second-grade classroom in Indianapolis, hopefully an urban classroom,” Johnson explains. “The curriculum will start with a pen pal effort between the classrooms, and then the kids will meet each other on TV.”

Duane Dillon, office manager of Wabash Valley Power Association, shares that most of the videoconferencing at the four locations has been used “internally between Wabash Valley Power’s member-cooperatives.”

He says that ideally, however, key accounts and other rural community organizations also will take advantage of the high-tech capabilities.

“We didn’t want it simply to be where we could only communicate with our members,” he elaborates, reflecting on the development of the pilot program. “We wanted to have the ability to connect with virtually anyone who has videoconferencing equipment.”

According to Dillon, several factors influenced which locations were selected to offer videoconferencing equipment: proximity to other members, highway access and a willingness to participate.

Resources: Stephanie Johnson at stephaniej@jasperremc.com or Duane Dillon at (317) 481-2800 or duaned@wvpa.com

