

"You can do it. You don't need to wait for windmills on your ridge to do it."

Energy expert urges students to take action

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LORETTO — St. Francis University students learned how they might make a greener tomorrow through community-supported renewable energy Tuesday evening.

The university's renewable energy center welcomed author and community-based energy expert Greg Pahl, who wrote "Citizen-Powered Energy: Community Solutions to a Global Crisis" and other books about conserving energy.

The center's Chrysa Wyland said the program was held in hopes that students might start a community-based system wherever they might live after they graduate.

"We're trying to spread the word about renewable energy and get people to take it seriously," she said.

Erik Foley, the center's director, said communities should be concerned with renewable energy because the demand for energy is increasing, the conventional supply is decreasing, prices are unstable, the climate is changing and the energy crisis is affecting national security and public health.

Foley said the U.S. Department of Energy spends \$4 billion on jet fuel for planes that protect us from the countries we are buying fuel from.

He also said mercury from burning coal is contaminating sporting fish in Pennsylvania, and the state emits 50 pounds of mercury a day.

"You can do it," he told students. "You don't need to wait for windmills on your ridge to do it."

Pahl said community-supported energy stimulates the local



Pahl

economy, expands the local tax base, generates new income, gets people involved and retains money in the local economy.

"Local ownership is a key ingredient that transforms what otherwise would be just another corporate energy project into an engine for local economic development and greater energy security," he said.

Communities in other states started projects such as converting a school boiler to run on wood chips, using methane gas from cow manure to provide electricity to a farm and three houses or the bio-gas-powered train in Sweden named "Amanda" that runs off the gas produced by the entrails of cows slaughtered for meat.

Pahl said dedicated residents make the common thread between the examples of community-supported renewable energy projects countrywide.

To start a community-supported project, begin studying available resources, figure out which projects make sense, form a project team and get technical advice for the project, he said.

"Even if all you do is convince your school to put solar panels on the school, why not start there and work your way up?" he asked. "Community-supported energy is an idea whose time has definitely arrived. Almost every city [and] town in the country has the potential for a community-supported energy project."

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