

CONNECT THE GREEN: RENEWABLE ENERGY'S FUTURE WORKFORCE



YES! participants ask questions at Phoenix Solutions, a plasma gasification testing site in Hutchison that provides hardware and processes for reducing waste to businesses throughout the world.

What do an engineer in an industrial park, a central Minnesota dairy farmer and a school teacher-turned-entrepreneur have in common?

If you guessed an occupation in the renewable energy industry, you're right. If you said presenting information about this exciting field to nearly 50 high school students from southwest Minnesota, you're right again.

The students are members of the Youth Energy Summit (YES!) teams, a program of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and SWIF that uses hands-on experiential learning and energy action projects to address energy opportunities and issues.

During a Feb. 4 winter workshop in Hutchinson, students representing eight of this year's 12 YES! teams and their coaches toured unique businesses, such as Creekside Soils, McLeod County Solid Waste Management Recycling Facility and Phoenix Solutions.

"Greater Minnesota boasts an almost endless supply of examples that showcase ingenuity and opportunities connected to renewable energy," SWIF Program Specialist Cheryl Glaeser said. "It's great for these students to get a first-hand look at what's happening now and learn how they can get involved."

Teams also heard presentations from those who work in the renewable energy sector – such as engineers, consultants and entrepreneurs.

Rich Huelskamp, a consultant for the U of M's Haubenschild Methane Digestion Project, explained how a Minnesota dairy farmer is zeroing out his farm's operating costs by using a methane digester that produces high-grade fertilizer for his crops and generates electricity to power his farm, with the remaining electricity sent to help power his neighbors' farms. Orville Moe, Founder/Director of Legislative Affairs for Onsite Power Systems,



SWIF Grants support YES! Community Projects

SWIF proudly awarded grants of \$800 to \$1,000 to each of the following YES! teams to assist their energy action project development and implementation. Projects range from CFL bulb, composting and recycling campaigns to greenhouse and solar projects.

- Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City
- Canby
- Glencoe-Silver Lake
- Lac qui Parle Valley High School
- Marshall
- Morris
- New London-Spicer
- Redwood Valley
- Springfield
- Willmar

For more details about the YES! teams and energy action projects, visit:

www.swifoundation.org/yes.html

Inc., explained how anaerobic digestion from food waste may operate vehicles using hydrogen fuel.

Rebecca Lundberg, president of Minnesota-based Powerfully Green, reduced her home's electricity usage by 66 percent by combining energy conservation habits and solar electric power. Lundberg left the teaching profession to design and install solar energy systems and educate small business and home owners on harnessing the sun's power and make other changes to decrease energy costs and carbon footprint.

"Introducing students to career possibilities and opportunities in renewable energy is an important piece of the YES! program because they are southwest Minnesota's future workforce," Glaeser added.