

# School, business partnerships lauded

## Campaign cut high school's energy use

GRAEME MORTON, CALGARY HERALD

Three elements southern Alberta has in spades are sunshine, wind and bright, inquiring students.

In combination, they've created a unique learning initiative at Cochrane High School that earned a 2006 Calgary Educational Partnership Foundation Mayor's Excellence Award at a luncheon Tuesday.

The awards, now in their 11th year, recognize successful partnerships between the Calgary-area business and educational communities.

"We looked at the Science 10 curriculum and the emphasis it had on wind and solar power as alternative energy sources," said Cochrane High science teacher Stephanie Bennett.

"Students and staff decided they wanted to 'walk the walk' on this issue instead of just learning about it from a textbook," Bennett said.

A group of 14 Cochrane students grabbed the project and ran with it, holding open houses and making pitches to businesses and non-profit agencies.

By campaign's end, students had raised \$47,000 from more than 50 partners, with donations ranging from \$25 to \$5,000. Those funds bought 30 solar panels and a wind turbine for the school's roof in an effort to cut its conventional energy use.

"It was an amazing experience," said Lisa Bennett, who graduated from Cochrane High last June.

"Word just spread and the support from our community was beyond what we hoped for."

The school's utility bills and carbon dioxide emissions have fallen since the panels were installed a year ago. Just as importantly, Bennett says the project has sparked teens and their parents to think about their own activism.

"We're already one-third of the way to acquiring 12 more solar panels, which will power our gym's scoreboard," said Bennett.

Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier said the awards were established to honour "everyone who reaches out and positively impacts the education of Calgary students."

Other winners included:

- **Chairman's award:** Archie Timmerman.
- **Business person** of the year: Barb Livingstone, Calgary Herald.
- **Educator of the year:** Kevin Willms, Ernest Manning High School.
- **Multi-sector partnership:** Calgary Board of Education, First Calgary Savings and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Calgary for Between Generations program helping seniors mentor students.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Junior League of Calgary for the Junior Chefs program, which uses hands-on nutritional education to tackle both childhood hunger and obesity.
- **School-to-Work Transition:** William Aberhart High School and Vocational and Rehabilitational Research Institute for the Adapted Learning Program for students with cognitive disabilities.
- **Small Business:** Stepper Homes and Bowness High School for a program encouraging construction trades.
- **Special Settings:** CBE, Calgary Catholic School District and Chevron Canada Resources for Opens Minds program of week-long sessions at the zoo, Glenbow Museum, Telus World of Science and Cross Conservation Area.
- **Special Needs:** Calgary Catholic and Renfrew Educational Services for a rehabilitative services partnership for kindergarten children.
- **Literacy Support and Enhancement:** Connaught Community School and ConocoPhillips Canada for a broad-based literacy initiative.
- **Advancement of Aboriginal Youth:** Father Lacombe High School and United Way for an initiative to boost high school completion rates.

The winners received prints of a dramatic photo of hoodoos at dawn taken in the Alberta badlands by Herald photographer Tim Fraser.

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