

CHS power project could break new ground

■ *School would be first in Canada to use wind and sun for partial power*

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Times Reporter

Cochrane High School could be responsible for putting this town of 13,000 on the map by being the first school in Canada to use wind and sun to partially power itself — as long as the Sustainable Development Project gets the community support it needs.

And community members are invited to see how it works at an open house March 27 from 10-11 a.m. at the school lyceum.

Stephanie Bennett, science teacher and co-founder of the innovation, explained the school's goal is to install 24 solar panels and one wind turbine in the roof of the school — a project that will produce not only energy to power parts of the school, but enough left over to add to the general power grid of Alberta.

"Here's an opportunity to make a difference and a positive difference," said

Bennett, ~~adding as a bonus, they would receive energy subsidies from the province for all the energy going into the grid.~~ "There is no other school that's done this, where they are an actual producer of electricity as well as a user, so we'll represent a first of its kind in the country."

It's even feasible to assume some of that renewable energy might go to power homes and businesses in town.

The open house will feature a presentation outlining the intricacies of the project and will be completely powered by solar energy.

The idea was born in 2000 when Bennett and her colleague, chemistry teacher Earl Binder, were discussing their science curriculum and thought it would be neat to expand the energy portion out of the classroom.

They drafted a proposal from a vision to retrofit the school with solar panels and wind turbines, and took it to the central office. The proposal was a hit and

was given approval.

The Rocky View School Division maintenance and grounds crews have agreed to install the 2m X 4m solar panels and the 400-watt wind turbine free of charge.

The project will cost the school a total of \$40,000. When this story first ran in the Times in January, the Sustainable Development fund was sitting at \$100 from Bennett's own pocket. Now, the balance of the fund is almost \$13,000.

"We're getting there," said Bennett.

They are also looking for able-bodied volunteers to help with the installation of the technologies.

The school plans to erect a plaque on which all donors' names will be engraved and will issue charitable tax receipts if requested.

You can donate by making your cheque payable to Cochrane High School and mailing it to 529 4th Ave. North, Cochrane, Alberta, T0L 0W2, or just dropping it off at the school.

For more information or to RSVP for the open house, call Bennett at 932-2542 ext. 402, fax at 932-5133 or e-mail her at sbennett@rockyview.ab.ca. Please try to RSVP by March 24.

"We hope you will come and join us in trying to make a difference in our global community — your presence at this function will mean a great deal to the team," said Bennett. "Through this program, we will learn about the costs and benefits of using renewable energy first-hand. Our school will be a model institute to others in the division, province and country, and, most importantly, we will learn about being environmental stewards and making a positive difference in the world of sustainable development."