



DENNIS WIANCKO

Big Bright Green Pleasure Machine Energy Park at the Country Fair

by Nicole Fancher

While the Oregon Country Fair boasts some of the best art, music and entertainment congregated at one place and time, it is also a meeting ground for some of the hottest renewable energy technologies in the country. So before you get entranced by Arabian belly dancers or gorge on fried rice bowls and pass out in a shady grove, head to Energy Park to get some eco-edumacation.

Energy Park is dedicated to giving fairgoers information about new ideas and technologies in the renewable energy field. Here you can learn about passive solar heating and photovoltaics — and even find out how to build a wind turbine. But Energy Park's Promotions Coordinator George Patterson says visitors shouldn't think the park is solely about high-tech energy solutions. People can find information about sustainable agriculture, composting, recycled art, alternative transportation and much more. Patterson says there is no soliciting or selling of goods at Energy Park but solely an exchanging of ideas. "It's strictly informational," he says. "That's the real principal of Energy Park. It's a nonprofit zone."

Patterson says that while the fair has always been dedicated to minimizing its impact on the Veneta fairgrounds, each year volunteer organizers make improvements on energy consumption. One important component of fair operations is Peach Power, which is energy produced onsite. In recent years solar photovoltaic systems have been installed at several stage sites. The Energy Park Electric Company (entirely volunteer-run) sets up the PV systems and electric power for booth and nighttime

lighting a week in advance, together hauling in 8,000 to 10,000 pounds of gear and \$30,000-\$50,000 worth of solar panels. Patterson says that one exciting addition this year is the first phase of grid-tied solar electric power located in front of Dragon Plaza. Patterson says that while the Electric Co. will not have a booth at Energy Park, energy staff will be around to talk to anyone who's interested in solar voltaics or how the fair system is set up.

And getting to the fair doesn't have to up your carbon footprint too much either. The OCF added a "green ticket" option; each person can add \$1 to the ticket price and choose to put that money toward Peach Power, the zero waste initiative or Lane Transit District's new biodiesel buses. Taking the bus from downtown, especially if you walk or bike to the bus station (bike parking is limited; more is available near the LTD fair shuttle at the Valley River Center), is a good way to meet other fairgoers, enjoy some air conditioning and keep your footprint minimal. Of course, when you get there, head right to Energy Park to up your info and your fun.

This year's Energy Park has 23 exhibits with eco-activities and information. In addition, Kesey Stage will host live music and presentations from the following six eco-organizations:

BRING RECYCLING

Noon, Friday, July 13

The Glenwood-based gurus of all things recycling will hold a demonstration titled "Making Treasures out of Tattered T's." Hosted by Ruby the Resourceress, the presentation will show people how to turn old, ratty T-shirts and clothing into new, usable items such as rugs. BRING's Education Coordinator Jo Rodgers says this annual recycled art presentation at the fair is always an enjoyable event in keeping with BRING's "mission of educating, inspiring and having fun." The BRING booth will

provide a loom and T-shirt shreds for your recycled art endeavors, and of course, endless information about reuse and recycling throughout Lane County.

ORGANIC VALLEY COOPERATIVE

1 pm, Friday, July 13

In 1988, seven farmers came together with one goal: to save small, family-owned farms by focusing on sustainable agriculture. Now with a membership of 1,132 organic farmers, Organic Valley is the largest farmer-owned co-op in North America. CEO George Siemon, one of the original seven farmers, will talk about the co-op on Friday. An organic farmer since 1977, Siemon is one of the nation's top experts on organic agriculture. He has chaired the Organic Trade Association's Livestock Committee, served a USDA-appointed term on the National Organic Standards Board and was a member of the USDA's Small Farm Advisory Committee. In short, this guy knows pretty much everything about anything organic.

blueENERGY

Noon, Saturday, July 14

It began as an MIT class project in 2002 to develop a business model that would address underdeveloped countries' techno-



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logical needs. In 2003, Mathias Craig founded the nonprofit blueEnergy. Today blueEnergy has offices in Washington D.C., Paris and Bluefields, Nicaragua, and is dedicated to bringing low-cost sustainable energy to underdeveloped communities in Latin America. Craig says that traditional energy projects in the developing world are based solely on product installation, not on developing local capacity, so "the failure rate is horrible." Craig says blueEnergy stands out because its approach aims to engage community members, and teaches them how to build, maintain and operate the wind turbines.

blueEnergy's Saturday presentation, featuring a full-functioning wind turbine 12 feet in diameter, will highlight wind turbine technology and address the question: What does it really take to make energy projects work? Volunteering information will also be available. blueEnergy projects will be featured in an upcoming CNN Heroes series that will show a two-minute documentary of the organization's work in Nicaragua.

OREGON TILTH

12:30 pm, Saturday, July 14

Since 1974, Oregon Tilth has been a leader in research and education that promotes sustainable and equitable agricultural practices. The Portland-based nonprofit aims to provide consumers and conventional and organic farmers alike with information about the benefits of sustainable farming. Oregon Tilth's educational tools and programs include the newspaper *In Good Tilth*, published six times annually, which covers everything from soil science to gardening to organic legislation. Another educational program hosted by Oregon Tilth is the Organic Education Center at Luscher Farm in Clackamas County, where workshops and classes bring business leaders and farmers together to learn all aspects of organic farming.

Oregon Tilth is also an international leader in organic certification and has some of the most rigorous standards in the world. Oregon Tilth's strict system of onsite inspection and adherence to production standards make it a reliable and respected certified organic label. Oregon Tilth will host a presentation on composting and will have a booth all weekend with information about certification, gardening and sustainable farming.

APROVECHO

12:30 pm, Sunday, July 15

Based on 40 acres in rural Cottage Grove, Aprovecho is a research and educational nonprofit center that provides classes on permaculture, sustainable forestry and energy-efficient, renewable technologies. One educational program hosted by Aprovecho, The Sustainable Living Skills Internship, is an eight-week course that teaches self-sufficiency and how to live sustainably off the land: Participants grow their own food and produce their own energy. One aspect of the program is an emphasis on what Aprovecho calls non-polluting "appropriate technologies" including solar water heaters, composting toilets and solar cookers. Aprovecho's research center has developed cooking stove technology in underdeveloped countries that drastically improves the health and safety of people in impoverished communities, where indoor air pollution is a leading cause of death among women and children.

WINTER SUN DESIGN

1 pm, Sunday, July 15

Chris Herman is a certified professional building designer who specializes in passive solar residential designs. He founded Winter Sun Design in 1987 and co-founded both the Northwest Eco-Building Guild and Solar Washington Association. Herman's expertise ranges from conventional to alternative home designs, photovoltaics and low-toxicity building materials. Wonder how you can save money and energy on heating your home? Come to Herman's presentation Sunday to get expert advice that can help make it happen. **EW**

For more information about the Energy Park, the exhibitors and Kesey Stage presenters and performers, check out www.energypark.org and get to the fair sustainably on the new LTD biodiesel bus!