

Environmental Issue

☀ Renewable energy overview (see our bulletin insert, business letter, video, and newspapers articles for more specific details about the issue).

- ☀ Energy created from constant available resources like sun and wind
- ☀ Cuts down on CO₂ emissions made from non-renewable resources
- ☀ Replaces use of non-renewable resources like oil, natural gas, and coal
 - ☀ 93% of energy in the USA comes from non-renewable resources

☀ Solar energy

- ☀ Surprisingly, 6000 people in Wisconsin have jobs dealing solely with solar power!
 - ☀ The fifth-largest amount in the country
- ☀ Our State Capitol and other large businesses use solar energy

☀ Issue to address

- ☀ Since schools use a lot of energy, we thought we would start there. In the first challenge we informed and challenged our school community to go green and raise funds to purchase solar panels for our school. By doing this we raised \$3,500 towards our goal to raise \$7,000 to purchase a solar panel.
- ☀ We decided to continue what we started for the final challenge because we wanted to achieve our goal, there were a number of steps in our previous action plan we wanted to see through, and we had some new exciting ideas to encourage others to look into renewable energy too!



Action Plan Steps

Our Challenge

- ☀ Send out thank you notes/donation receipts to our benefactors so far
- ☀ Create a segment in the parish bulletin to inform parishioners and ask for support
- ☀ Contact local newspapers (Wisconsin State Journal and Madison Catholic Herald) to publicize our story
- ☀ Raise at least \$3945.00 to add to our solar panel fund
- ☀ Send information and ask for support through neighborhood listserve email
- ☀ Send letter to local businesses asking for support
- ☀ Look into grants, matching funds, and large donors

Challenge Others

- ☀ Create a classroom lesson plan to help our school understand renewable energy
- ☀ Challenge our 7th grade to take the baton in continuing this challenge for our school in the future
- ☀ Look into partnerships with Madison Gas & Electric
- ☀ Create a documentary video to show our story to people everywhere, especially teens in other schools, and encourage them to use renewable energy
- ☀ Create a scholarship for another school to get started on a project dealing with preserving the environment like we did



Implementing our Idea

☀ Challenging Others

- ☀ We created a lesson plan for our school to inform the younger grades about our project and encourage them to be mindful of their energy usage. MG&E is providing solar energy house kits and an “energy-ware” bike that powers different types of light bulbs. These tools will make our lesson more exciting and provide interactive experience for students.
- ☀ We plan to challenge the 7th grade to continue raising funds for solar panels for our school next year when we’re gone. We will share our PowerPoint and all that we did with them and explain ideas of places to seek support that we did not get to this year.
- ☀ We contacted Madison Gas and Electric and our teacher met with their Community Education Manager on our behalf to explore partnership opportunities with them. They are going to partner with us in 2 exciting ways (see the project gallery for more information.) :
 - ☀ offer a statewide teacher professional development course for staff at St. James and surrounding K-12 schools at our school in the Fall on the topic of renewable energy.
 - ☀ feature our group with a picture and story in their annual Earth Day Fun book, which gets sent to schools all over Wisconsin.
- ☀ We contacted Tim Tynan, UW-Madison’s Life Sciences Department Technology Enhanced Learning Lead Consultant, who helped us create a documentary video to share our story. We plan to send this to other local schools, play it at the MG&E professional development course in the Fall, and post it to YouTube and SchoolTube with the hopes of inspiring other people to make an energy change like we did.
 - ☀ We don’t just want to encourage other schools, we also want to offer them help to get going on a project, so, with the first \$1,000 we get after we raise \$7,000 for our solar panel, we are going to create a scholarship for another school to get started on a project like ours. It will be publicized in conjunction with our video.



*Tim Tynan of
UW-Madison is
producing our
documentary*



Project Gallery

INSIDE COVER

DIocese of Madison, Catholic Herald



Responding to the ecological challenge

St. James School team competes in national contest

By Kat Wagner
Catholic Herald Staff

MADISON — A team of eighth-grade students at St. James School recently won \$10,000 in the national Lexus Eco Challenge contest with a proposal and fundraising campaign to put a solar panel on the school. Now, this team from the small Catholic school is running against 15 teams from schools across the country for a chance to win \$30,000.

"What has been fun for me is to see them really engaged in it and their willingness to put their energy into it," said Gina Pignotti, the St. James School sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade science teacher and eighth grade religion and art teacher.

"I really liked the project," she said. "It engaged them as a topic that matters, and they could see that — it made an impact on them."

Developing a plan

The project came into being last year, near the beginning of the year. Pignotti split the eighth-grade class into two groups of eight and assigned each team to come up with an action plan that would address different environmental elements, according to the Lexus Eco Challenge handbook or articles. One team decided to tackle ozone depletion; the other team looked at renewable energy sources.

Each team researched their topic thoroughly, collectively deciding on the angle they would address, and brought in or interviewed experts in the field.

The team working on an educational initiative on ozone depletion interviewed professors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, including a Nobel Prize winner. They developed a Web site and, with the help of Ryan Freng, co-owner of the Madison-based video production company Backflip Film Productions, a video now published online.

The team working on renewable energy sources narrowed down their focus to solar panels and spoke to representatives at Madison Gas and Electric to determine the feasibility of using solar

panels to offer the energy usage at a school such as St. James. One solar panel would cost \$7,000 and, according to the research done by the team, would pay itself off in only eight years.

For a school with only 195 students, this seemed like a goal too high to be achievable.

"When we thought of it, we didn't think we'd start raising the money," said Andres Wright, one of the solar panel team members.

"Seven thousand dollars is a lot for a little school," said Andres Wright, one of the solar panel team members.

But with the help and expertise of Carolyn Overell, development associate at St. Paul University Catholic Center in Madison, the team learned the basics of fundraising and developed a plan to raise the amount for one solar panel.

At the beginning of January the team sent out a letter and pledge card to school families and received several thousand in donations.

Continuing the challenge

In mid-February, the solar panel project passed the air/

eight grade team from St. James School in Madison whose solar panel project won the first round in the national Lexus Eco Challenge, poses with their educational model of how solar panels operate, in addition to their model, which they used in demonstrations, the team hoped to create a video and commercial and raise the rest of the funds to put a solar panel on the school. (Catholic Herald/for the writer)

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St. James 8th Graders Win National Science Competition: Awarded \$10,000



Bottom row (l. to r.): Lydia Swanson, Laura White, Ariel Colby, Fiona Stutz. Top row (l. to r.): Savannah Wallace, Mathreana DeMarco, Samantha Harrington, Andrea Wright.

Looking for your support to win next round for \$30,000!

We are the Ladies of the Light, a group of 8th grade girls from St. James. We have been working on a project called the Lexus Eco Challenge, a program sponsored by Scholastic that encourages students across the country to take action in their community to protect the environment.

After researching renewable energy resources, our team decided to raise money for solar panels to put on St. James School. These panels cost \$7,000 each. We raised \$3,500 through donations from school families. Then we found out we won the first round of the Eco Challenge, meaning we were awarded \$10,000 from Scholastic and Lexus. \$8,000 goes to teacher and student grant/scholarship money and \$2,000 goes to the school to put towards the solar panel project. So, now we have \$5,500 towards our effort.

But it can't ever yet! The next round of the Eco Challenge has started. In this round we are competing against 15 other teams across the country to win the grand prize of \$30,000. In this round, we need to take our project to the next level. Amongst other things, we are still trying to raise the \$7,000 (or more for even more panels) and we are calling on you to help. If you could please consider making a gift to support this exciting project, it would be greatly appreciated. Use the attached pledge card and return it to St. James School.

Thank you for your support!
- The Ladies of the Light

Check out the attached Catholic Herald article they just ran about us!

Parish Bulletin Insert (was available in Spanish as well)

A2 • TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2011

FOCUS ON

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT



Photographer Tim Tynan sets up a camera to interview St. James School eighth-graders Ariel Colby, left, 14, and Mathreana Maurella de Macedo, 14, for part of their project in the Lexus Eco Challenge.

Students document Eco Challenge

Eighth-graders at St. James School are competing for a \$30,000 prize for work on renewable energy research.

By PAMELA COTYAR
For the State Journal

St. James School, a small Catholic school tucked away off South Mills Street, made a big splash when a group of eighth-graders won \$10,000 in a national renewable energy contest.

Two teams in teacher Gina Pignotti's eighth-grade science class entered projects in the Lexus Eco Challenge competition. One of the teams, which is raising \$7,000 to install a solar panel on the school and put pass it on," said Mathreana Maurella de Macedo, 14.

The other students are Ariel Colby, 14, Samantha Harrington, 14, Fiona Stutz, 13, Lydia Swanson, 13, Savannah Wallace, 14, Laura White, 13, and Andrea Wright, 13.

The fourth annual contest, which is part of a curriculum program developed by Lexus and Scholastic, the

"We want to bring a better future to our school and just pass it on."

—Mathreana Maurella de Macedo, 14, eighth-grade student

who has helped students produce videos, to create a short documentary about renewable energy, their experiences with the project and a challenge to others to learn about the issue and do something about it.

St. James plans to send the video to other schools and to post it on YouTube and SchoolTube, a website where students and teachers can share videos.

"I want to bring a better future to our school and just pass it on," said Mathreana Maurella de Macedo, 14.

The students are looking at ways to continue pushing renewable energy efforts at their school after the contest, partly by challenging the seventh-graders, Pignotti said. They also are considering starting a scholarship fund to help another school get started on a renewable energy project.

Catholic Herald Article

State Journal Article

Click thumbnails to view larger files



**LEXUS
ECO
CHALLENGE**

2010 - 2011