

The Daily Nonpareil

UI professors tout benefits of solar energy

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OAKLAND - They call themselves "a couple of nutty professors on funny bicycles," but University of Iowa occupational and environmental health professors David Osterberg and Tom Cook are trying to promote a message with their electrical assist solar powered bikes.

"Global warming is real," said Osterberg, a member of the Iowa Policy Project and leader of this year's Green Bike Tour, which promotes the use of renewable energy. "Renewable energy is a way of doing something about it."

Osterberg, Cook and Ed Woolsey, an entrepreneur in the renewable energy field, were in Oakland Tuesday afternoon to tout the potential of solar and wind energy as a part of their eight-day Green Bike Tour that first started in 1999.

Beginning on Sept. 21 and concluding on Sept. 28, the tour demonstrates to businesses, farmers and elected officials how renewable energy can have a positive effect on rural economies by stopping in several cities throughout the Midwest.

"Renewable energy is really the economic development engine of today and the future," Woolsey said.

"Renewable energy is the answer," added Osterberg. "We demonstrate that by going places that are making that a reality."

The tour made a stop at the Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development "green building" in Oakland to talk about more ways to conserve energy, and to honor Sen. Hubert Houser for his leadership on renewable energy in the 2005 and 2006 legislative sessions.

Houser was able to help pass an extension of the "small wind tax credit," a bill that assists Iowans who would like to get into the wind power business. Houser also played a role in the Solar Energy Bill that exempts solar equipment from Iowa sales tax, making solar energy more affordable.



Staff photo/Nicole Weis - (From left): Tom Cook, David Osterberg and Ed Woolsey, leaders on the 2006 Green Bike Tour made a stop at the Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development "green building" in Oakland Tuesday to promote the use of renewable energy.

Shirley Frederiksen, Coordinator for the Golden Hills RC&D, boasted that the 3,650 square foot "green building" features energy efficient windows, uses mostly natural lighting and has a utility bill of just \$200 a month.

"We like renewable energy a lot and our obviously dedicated to it," Frederiksen said. "The proof is in the pudding with renewable energy."

Cook echoed that statement. He said by riding his electrical assist bicycle the 10 miles it takes him to get to work each day at the University of Iowa, he has saved money on gas, reduced the amount of pollutants put into the air and trimmed his waistline.

"We talk about things that are good for people's health and renewable energy is one of those things," Osterberg stressed. "If more people used their legs to get places, society would be a lot better off."

Osterberg also discussed the potential for wind energy in Iowa schools.

"Ten schools in Iowa have their own wind machines and I don't know why there aren't 50," he said, noting that Iowa Policy Project recently received a grant from the Iowa Energy Center to put on a conference for school officials and personnel in January regarding wind energy.

Winds plants, Osterberg pointed out, create numerous jobs and increase the amount of money that goes back into the community.

"If you do it right, local people make money," he said.

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