

SOAKING UP THE SUN: SOLAR FAIRE OFFERS SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TAKEAWAYS

Source: Sameea Kamal, Glendale News Press, April 21, 2014

<http://www.glendalenewspress.com/news/tn-gnp-soaking-up-the-sun-solar-faire-offers-sustainable-energy-takeaways-20140421,0,5018688.story>

Solar ovens. Solar artwork. Solar phone chargers. Out of electricity? No problem. You can still power up.

That was the lesson many took away at the third annual Solar Faire, hosted by Glendale Water and Power in partnership with Sebastopol, Calif.-based nonprofit the Rarus Institute and the Glendale Unified School District.

This year's festival, which took place on Saturday at Woodrow Wilson Middle School, featured hands-on workshops where participants could build their own solar ovens, create solar etchings and watch demonstrations of solar power, such as how to power up a solar fountain.

More than 300 people attended the free fair, held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., which featured quesadillas and cookies baked on a solar oven, as well as vendors providing information about residential solar power.

It was the second year of attendance for Glendale residents Vishal Goel and Ashima Gupta, one of 11 families who signed up to build solar ovens.

"My wife did 80% of the work," Goel said. They brought their 5-year-old daughter Avishi, to "learn the concept of how important it is to save the planet," he said.

The couple was so inspired after attending last year's event they had solar panels installed on their home.

"It is the responsibility of people from our generation to make sure the kinds of things we are enjoying — this nature and mountains and all these green things, we want to make sure our next generation can enjoy these things," he said.

Goel and Gupta learned about the event through a Glendale Water and Power newsletter.

"[Building the oven] was a little difficult, we are not very handy, but the volunteers were really helpful," Gupta said. "Hopefully we will actually use it."

"We will use it," Goel responded. "We're going camping in May and we're going to take it with us."



A young artist uses a magnifying glass to etch a solar design into a piece of wood. (photo Varsenik & Ani)



Ashima Gupta and Vishal Goel show off their completed solar oven [photo Tor Allen].

Woodrow Wilson Middle School sixth-grade teacher Elizabeth Bitow, who teaches math and science, was one of the festival’s main organizers.

Bitow attended a weeklong Solar Schoolhouse workshop about six years ago in Northern California and said she was so inspired, she started teaching her students about solar energy. And after a solar energy event took place at Mark Keppel Elementary, the math and science teacher wanted to bring a similar event to the middle school.

The fair was also an opportunity for Woodrow Wilson teachers to raise money for a science-themed field trip by selling hot dogs, burgers and drinks.

“I’m very excited, the turnout has been fabulous,” Bitow said, adding that she thought many students might not show up due to the Easter holiday.

Tor Allen, executive director of the Rarus Institute, said Solar Schoolhouse has tried different events throughout California since 2000, including hosting solar Olympics events at different schools. The Solar Faire is the nonprofit’s major annual event, held in Glendale for the last three years.

“Our overall hope is that as we introduce more solar and energy literacy in to the classrooms, students will be better prepared to be actively participating in clean energy as adults,” Allen said.

Goel added that he plans to share his new oven-building skills with others.

“I learned [how to build a solar oven], I will tell 10 more people, and hopefully out of 10 people at least two will follow,” he said.

[For more information about Solar Schoolhouse Activities, projects, curriculum, workshops, events... visit solarschoolhouse.org]

Contact: Tor Allen
Rarus Institute/Solar Schoolhouse
ph: 707-829-3154
tor@rarus.org
www.solarschoolhouse.org



Celine Young, Robotics/STEM teacher at Rosemont Middle School, displays the solar cell phone charger she build with her class, using cardboard & duct tape for the notebook. [photo by Tor Allen]



Event T-shirts with the message “The Solution Rises Every Day – Discover Solar” were provided to attendees. [photo V&A]