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Green News

HIGH SIERRA ENERGY FOUNDATION

Deanna Campbell, Director of Cerro Coso College, and Leslie O'Berry, Director of Special Projects for the High Sierra Energy Foundation

Cerro Coso hosts second annual energy Summit

By Rick Phelps, Executive Director, High Sierra Energy Foundation

Having an open forum where people can speak freely about new ideas and change is an important factor in the pursuit of "green" thinking. Discussing change is a great beginning to solving energy problems, but it can be difficult to coordinate these ideas if people do not have a spot to gather.

Cerro Coso Community College is making the statement that "green" living is the wave of the future by supporting the High Sierra Energy Summit—an event put on by the High Sierra Energy Initiative (a partnership between the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Southern California Edison)—for the second year in a row. By hosting the Summit at their Mammoth Lakes campus and providing enough gathering space for at least 100 people, Cerro Coso is demonstrating that they are on board for change. The college is even planning to add a renewable energy resource program to their year-round curriculum schedule.

"Last year's Summit showed us that there is an interest in energy efficiency programs, so right now Cerro Coso is going through the state level process of getting a new Wind Technology program approved for its campuses," said Deanna Campbell, Director for the Eastern Sierra College Center of Cerro Coso

Wind technology was highlighted at last year's Summit and will be expanded upon at this year's event.

"That's really the goal of this year's Summit," Campbell stated. "We want to go from just giving people information to giving them a forum that they can participate in to actively make changes in their own lives. This year we want to hear feedback."

The idea is to create change not only in homes but at workplaces and throughout the community. The Summit hopes to give people the tools they need to make a change, whether that's in the form of a phone number to call or the name of a business that has the energy saving equipment they need.

Cerro Coso has helped to create this forum for ideas by partnering with the High Sierra Energy Initiative to develop the curriculum for the Summit. Besides also providing the location, Cerro Coso provides college credit for participants who register for the event and attend the entire week.

"By registering for college credit, participants become a student of Cerro Coso for the summer semester," Campbell said. "This means they receive all the benefits that come along with being a student, such as being able to use our facilities and computers." The Summit is worth two units of elective credit.

Scholarships are available to encourage participation from those who would otherwise not be able to cover the \$40 fee. Campbell said that the scholarships are also meant to encourage employers to send their employees to the Summit in order to begin to help spread energy efficiency in the workplace.

"Like any other community initiative, this forum will be about changing ideas," Campbell said. There are more and more ways for our community to lead the way in green living and this is just one more way to take advantage of learning how," she added.

Campbell cited the fact that ski resorts around the world are becoming increasingly competitive about being "green" as one way this Summit would be particularly important to the entire community.

To continually improve the Summit each year (everyone involved agrees that it will continue to be an annual event), Campbell said that some ideas in the works were to create less of a footprint for the event by printing fewer materials.

"Already we have registration online so that we are not producing any paper," Campbell said.

In order to access that registration or find out more about the Summit, simply go online to www.highsierraenergysummit.com and hit the registration key. You may also apply for one of the 100 scholarships. The Summit takes place August 11-15, with week-long courses focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy resources.

The Kick'n 'Off the Grid' High Energy Party will set the tone for the Summit on August 10 at the Village from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., featuring music by Almost Famous and The Tresspassers. This will be a free event with energy exhibits, bratwurst and beverages.