

idea corner

Energy Conservation: A Success Story

In January, 1978, energy conservation was something new to most Extension Service offices. But Pinellas County, Florida, got lucky. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) at the University of Florida in Gainesville selected this county for a pilot program in energy.



Follow-up meetings.

This was a welcome challenge since Gil Whitton, director of the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service, and his staff enjoy tackling worthwhile problems. The newly established energy office contacted all energy-related agencies in Florida to obtain information helpful in preparing an energy manual.

To get as many people in the community involved in energy conservation as possible, the office decided to work through volunteers. Volunteers attend four two-hour workshops, learning to use the manual that provides information on energy's historical perspective, alternate sources of energy, conserving energy in family automobile use, and reducing energy usage in the home. The manual also contains visual aids to be used when working with audiences consisting of existing community organizations and people just interested in learning how to conserve energy.

Field trips are planned to keep up with current energy developments. The volunteers have follow-up meetings to update information coming into our energy office and demonstrate new

methods they've developed to fellow volunteers. At one gathering, a working model of a solar plate collector was constructed to show the public that solar energy can work. These sessions give the workers an opportunity to exchange ideas and develop enthusiasm for their efforts.

The volunteers have helped determine just how energy conscious our county population is. Residents of apartment and condominium complexes that are publishing newsletters were surveyed about their energy usage. With our office furnishing information to the newsletters, we're able to reach about 15,000 people each month. The residents will be surveyed again to find how effective our work has been.

Clubs throughout our community have requested presentations by volunteers to help them cut their energy costs. Presentations have been given at Rotary and Optimist clubs, Neighborly Centers, Hi Neighbors, garden clubs, professional women's clubs, and mobile home associations. The audiences have ranged from



Working model of a solar plate collector.

25 to 500 in attendance. The information given at these gatherings is always well-received.

Our volunteers have also been working with families on a one-to-one basis. These are families having problems meeting their energy bills. When working with these people, the greatest emphasis is put on kilowatt consumption, since our county is largely an "electric" community.

By giving family members instruction on how to read their electric meters

and electric bills (along with information on the kilowatt usage of various appliances), the family learns to budget kilowatt dollars as well as food and shelter dollars. These experiences have been encouraging. Since working with actual bills, we can see the impact our office is having on residents of the area.

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