

SolWest

Renewable Energy Fair hosts 2,000 visitors



A solar water pump provides a refreshing stream on a warm afternoon. Solar panels, pumps and inverters are among the hardware

People from 20 states and three countries, including Florida, Virginia, Japan, and Mexico visited SolWest Renewable Energy Fair in 2002 to take in exhibits on solar, wind, water and other renewable energy and sustainable living topics.

SolWest Fair, now in its fourth year, is the premier event in the Northwest providing a forum for energy education and networking. Renewable energy experts like Joe Schwartz of *Home Power* magazine, Steve Wilke of Bergery Wind Power, and passive solar leader Anthony Stoppiello presented over 40 workshops including Radiant Floor Heating with Solar, On-grid and Off-grid Wind Power, Principles of Solar Water Pumping, Fundamentals of

Photovoltaics, and many other technical subjects. A solar-powered tracking telescope allowed viewers to see features on the surface of the sun.

Tours went from SolWest to visit energy projects at the Prairie Wood Co-generation plant, and the solar-powered office that houses EORenew (the nonprofit organization that runs SolWest). Keynote speakers Joshua Tickell and Tom Allen explored the state of energy and politics in the world today. During a hands-on workshop two days before the fair, participants installed a solar water pumping system at a nearby residence.

This was the first year in which children's workshops were part of the program. Younger children sang along with appliance puppets as

they watched them figure out what it takes to live in a world of uncertain energy futures. Older children made solar cookers out of pizza boxes, then cooked English muffin pizzas in them.

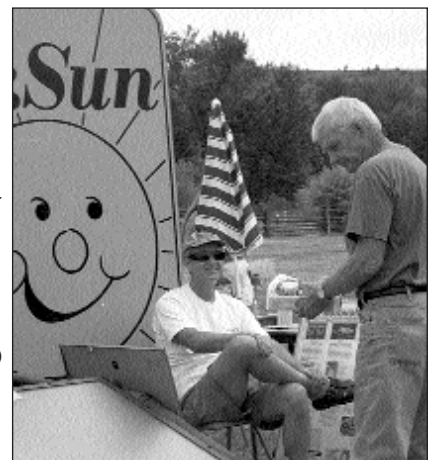
Twenty-four vehicles driven by high school students and adults competed in the SolWest Electrathon, a lightweight vehicle rally emphasizing design and driving efficiency. All vehicles start with the same minimum weight including driver, and the same amount of batteries. The goal of the rally is to make the most laps around a course in an hour. If the driver has too heavy a foot on the accelerator, though, she or he runs out of battery power before the hour is up, and the steady, efficient driver has power left to lap the others at the end.

SolWest visitors could see and purchase home energy systems from 50 manufacturers, dealers, and installers. Products available at SolWest ranged from the low-tech (Solar Wall, a fresh-air heating system, and Glockemann water-driven water pumps) to the high-tech (the OutBack "Mate" power conversion system controller, and WinVerter

software to allow a PC to control an inverter), and everything in between (new and rebuilt wind turbines, solar electric panels, wood-fired hydronic heaters, solar DC water pumps, and more).

One unique feature of SolWest is the on-site camping and easy walking distances around John Day. Networking doesn't stop when the gates close, but goes on into the night under solar-powered LED-lit canopies, over solar-blended margaritas, and in the restaurants of the town, all within about a six-block area.

SolWest Renewable Energy Fair takes place the last full weekend of July each year. For more information, contact EORenew at 541-575-3633 or info@solwest.org. This year's SolWest Fair will be July 25-27, 2003.



John Patterson of Portland's Mr. Sun Solar explains solar hot water to interested fairgoers.