



**Great Lakes
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan Energy Fair ~ A Huge Success!

Onkama, MI (June 16-18, 2006) – Thousands of people flocked to the quaint Northwest Michigan town of Onkama during the weekend of June 16-18, 2006 to learn about a challenge currently facing our State and nation: Energy. The Michigan Energy Fair, held at the Manistee County Fairgrounds, was a huge success, educating 2500 people on issues such as energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies like solar and wind power, and ways to live sustainably on our earth. Jennifer Alvarado, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association (GLREA) said “we’re happy that the Fair, has turned out to be such a wonderful success. It is nice to see the hard work of so many dedicated volunteers and partners translate into a phenomenal event.”

The Michigan Energy Fair opened Friday with Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids speaking on the importance of cities moving towards using renewable energy. Mayor Heartwell emphasized that the best way to spur a real move to renewable energy is by approaching the Mayors and City Councils who can facilitate local change. Friday evening closed with a phenomenal performance by *Same Ole’ 2 Step*, a Louisiana Zydeco Band, who were accompanied by *Lil’ Guyland*, an eight year old musical prodigy. The band’s toe-tapping tunes had everyone on their feet.

The fairgrounds opened to the public on Saturday morning, June 17th. The beautiful day drew in a large crowd to enjoy the myriad of workshops, keynote speakers, special tours and over sixty exhibitors. Attendees also were treated to a special sight - John Heiss’ (of Northwoods Energy Alternatives) 3 kilowatt wind turbine, specially installed for demonstration during the Energy Fair. Saturday also served as the Fair’s special Kid’s Day. In addition to face painting and a bird feeder craft, the Kid’s Tent featured a special energy carnival hosted by Connie Josvai of Manistee’s Kennedy Elementary and her students and parent volunteers. At the Energy Carnival, participants answered energy trivial questions. Each correct answer gave the students an opportunity to try their hand at a special themed carnival game. Games included Hydropower Duck Pond, Biomass Bowling, Geothermal Golf and much more!

Dan Chiras, author of *The Homeowner’s Guide to Renewable Energy* and *The Natural House*, spoke of the importance of ending America’s addiction to fossil fuels. David Konkle of the Ann Arbor Energy Office discussed the movement of the City of Ann Arbor toward using more renewable energy. Saturday evening, Fair attendees enjoyed the mellow sounds of Michigan-based *Steppin’ In It*.

The rain did not deter the hundreds of attendees who still turned out to learn about energy issues on Sunday, June 18th. Several renewable energy contractors from the exhibitor hall mentioned that they felt the attendees who turned out in the rain were the true die-hards – the ones who were truly interested in moving forward and investing in renewable energy. In addition to the workshops, a highlight of Sunday

was the keynote address by local environmentalist David Milarch of the Champion Tree Project. Mr. Milarch spoke about sustainability in regards to Ecosystem and Watershed Restoration.

Attendees also enjoyed the renewable energy home tour, which visited several home and business sites in Northwestern Michigan. Highlights of the tour included a local community supported agriculture facility with a hybrid photovoltaic solar and wind system, a house designed utilizing hay bales and energy efficiency, a business featuring a one kilowatt photovoltaic solar electric system, and a home which has 95% of its energy use powered by solar and wind. The success of the RE home tour was evident when the tours sold out. Tours were also offered of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) *Huron Explorer*, a 41' research vessel which has been transformed to use bio-fuels and bio-based lubricants. Transportation for all tours was provided courtesy of the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA), who also brought their 27 foot low-emission hybrid-electric bus.

Over the course of Saturday and Sunday, fifty-two workshops were held that educated people on a variety of energy-related and sustainable living topics. Featured topics included permaculture, green building, wind siting guidelines, hybrid vehicles, solar heating, Peak Oil and much more! Workshop tents were consistently filled with attendees looking for more information on these important energy issues. Jennifer Alvarado noted "with over 2500 attendees for the three-day weekend event, this high level of interest in the Michigan Energy Fair certainly underscores Michigan residents' desire for a sustainable energy future in Michigan."

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