

For the duration of the summer of 2008 and up to the present, I have been involved with The Climate and Energy Project (CEP). CEP is a non-profit project of The Land Institute, based here in Lawrence KS. Their main objectives are dedicated to encouraging the development of renewable energies while simultaneously halting the Midwest's contribution to climate change by lowering carbon emissions. As I searched for possible internships that apply to my career interests, this one caught my eye first and foremost. Their Lawrence location and passionate, hard working and personable staff prove to me now that I was lucky to get onboard when I did. I unknowingly assumed before starting that a beginning internship with a big organization involves doing laborious, time consuming tasks without involvement in much of the real action. My experience so far with CEP has far exceeded those expectations. Initially, I presumed that I would be the runner or page for various time consuming things, yet all the while have educated people and been around others educating me on how to jump start my career in becoming involved in the fight for a brighter and cleaner energy future. CEP's small staff of workhorses was an inspiration to continue my education and become further involved in the fight for clean energy.

I was employed under the Director of Community Outreach, Eileen Horn. With her I was able to have creative and collaborative sessions on the best way to connect our message with people. CEP's approach to solving the problems with climate and energy issues is one that is constantly evolving and expanding. In the beginning of the summer, one of the "grassroots," approaches taken was to coordinate a series of "energy efficiency block parties." Essentially what we did was contact moderately large neighborhoods in and around the Kansas City area with an already existing neighborhood event. I then attended homes association's gatherings and spoke on behalf of CEP in order to put together a fun way for participants to learn about energy conservation, gain access to energy auditors, speak with efficiency experts and all the while socialize with neighbors and embrace the Kansas summer heat. We organized these energy efficiency block parties (EEBP's) around neighborhood pools and public areas, provided music and refreshments, and tried to maintain a very laid back yet informative gathering. For this task I took part in choosing the best locations for the gatherings. I was also in close contact with 11 different energy efficiency vendors and numerous members of homes associations. I helped in designing a free magnet giveaway, with a list of small things one could do to increase efficiency in and around the house. Although we did not have the turnouts we expected at every location, we still were able to reach around 400 people, and giveaway around 100 CFL's, courtesy of KCP&L. Overall I felt very proud, and actively involved in this first project at CEP.

Before I moved on to the next big project, I was assigned some very interesting tasks. One very astonishing job was the campaign contribution research I did. I sifted through hundreds of pages of campaign contributions from the last 5 years. The goal was to summate the amounts of financial support each current Kansas legislator, both from the House and Senate, had received from known utility companies. The results were astonishing. I then forwarded these findings on to environmental rock-star and Director of CEP, Nancy Jackson. Although my findings were public domain, there was not an easy way for regular Kansas citizens to see these results without clicking through a maze of links and different sites. I composed and posted a document to the website detailing how to easily access this information.

The next project we focused on is one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in my environmental education. At the state fair in September of this year, in Hutchinson, Kansas, CEP teamed up with thirteen other organizations associated with wind energy and focused on promoting the benefits of wind to Kansas citizens. This involved having interactive conversations with senators, land owners of wind farms, wind developers, and also farmers living on lucrative windy Kansas soil. I was able to listen in on conversations between residential-sized wind turbine salesmen and potential buyers, and understand the steps involved when installing a small energy-offsetting turbine. Another great part of this learning experience was the time I was able to spend with an extensive group of wind specialists. One very interesting interaction was the time I spent with the lead technician of the new 100.5 megawatt Spearville Wind Farm. From my experiences at the state fair representing CEP, I gained a lot of awareness of the arduous process Kansas faces in becoming the Mecca of renewable energies we are absolutely capable of being. Whether learning of the lack of current renewable energy standards, or the sluggish process policy makers must go through in order to jumpstart a society of renewable energy-dependent consumers, it seemed like the beginning of something big to me. I was also involved in conversations with hundreds of other Kansans who were anxious to become educated on the benefits of wind energy. There were even notable visits from both Governor Sebelius and Senator Brownback.

The prime focus I had during this exhibit was the collection of around 1500 postcards from real Kansas citizens in support of wind energy. Once the fair was over I was in charge of organizing the postcards by district and creatively demonstrating them in a useful manner before sending them off to their respective representatives. I was given a lot of freedom to suggest ideas and run with ways that I felt most suitable for effective demonstration. To publicize these quotes to all Kansans, I decided to develop an interactive 'Google map' of the state of Kansas with quotes and pictures geo-tagged to the location of the person sending the postcard. This map was sent to legislators in email, while the actual handwritten postcards were delivered to each Congressman in Topeka on January 28, 2009. On a side note, CEP partnered with KU scientists Nate Brunzell and Johannes Feddema in a climate study they conducted showing the effects climate change is projected to have on Kansas in the future. This report entitled, "Climate Change Hits Home, the risks to Kansas," contains two quotes I selected for a document containing the best quotes representing Kansans at the state fair wind energy exhibit.

One of the main goals of CEP is to reach out to as many people as possible through the Internet and the use of their website. I constructed and produced two videos that were linked to a 'YouTube' account that I setup for them to use in the future. One of the videos helped show the lack of net-metering standards along with various renewable energy standards Kansas ironically lacks, seeing that we are ranked the third windiest state in the nation! The video, entitled "Where does Kansas Stand?", has had almost 400 hits so far, and I feel it effectively illustrates Kansas's current stance (or lack thereof) on efficiency resource standards, net metering, and green house gas emission targets for that matter. The next video I produced was a documentary on a Kansas based Wind developer; It was titled, "A day at Enertech." This video shows interviews with Pretty Prairie Kansas superintendent of schools, Brad Wade, who is researching the benefits the installation of a wind turbine would have on his school. The goal was to try and take the ecological focus out of the debate for wind, and simply weigh the economic benefits. I am still currently waiting to gain permissions from the publisher for a song chosen as the background music, so this project has not been published on the web, yet.

The Climate and Energy Project's staff of six employees are amazing and aggressive champions of wind energy. Composed of intuitive web designers, a group of effective and passionate writers, and not to mention current college environmental professors, CEP is on the scene when anything is mentioned in the media in regards to renewable energy here in the state of Kansas. The lively energy and team oriented work environment has been a true motivator every single day that I have spent there.

Overall I feel that my continued involvement with CEP has been one of the most rewarding and educational experiences of my whole life. Not only have I learned first hand what kinds of things I can do with a degree in Environmental Studies, but I feel responsibility and first hand involvement in some of the major occurrences set to take place here in the near future in regards to renewable energies and the state of Kansas. Aside from what I learned in consideration to my course of study, some other things I gained from this experience were very useful lessons on working in a professional environment. Up until the time of my employment there, my entire work experience has varied from landscaping to life guarding to performing live musical entertainment to other miscellaneous not-so-formal environments. At CEP I have observed a very high-quality work ethic that requires formal work attire, and a very fun atmosphere that still maintains professionalism. I have attained many skills that I am confident will be influential on every other workplace I enter in the future. Very quickly I understood that in order to be successful in a professional office such as this one, one must be punctual with communication and response to business partners and coworkers - whether that means showing up on time, answering emails and phone calls as quickly and accurately as possible, or just simply doing something when you say you are going to do it. Being able to manage your time accurately and being reliable to your coworkers are both things I have developed in my time spent at CEP. In order to succeed in such a fast paced atmosphere it is a good idea to stay refreshed and knowledgeable on current events. Knowing the verbiage and language used in this field took some time to get the hang of. There are many acronyms, and unfamiliar words thrown around, and if you are not savvy on what they mean you get left in the dark pretty quickly. I did quite a bit of extracurricular reading for this internship that overlapped seamlessly with my Environmental Studies course load as well. I became very familiar with reports on the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, current Kansas energy policies, and inevitably learned about the true influence policy makers have on the way we treat our planet.

Working at CEP has been a monumental experience in my life, and I am still currently employed there as the Outreach Assistant. It is my ambition to someday have a career somewhere in the renewable energy industry. Whether or not I choose to become a teacher or get on board with a wind developer, I know that my time spent at CEP and the connections I have made with countless individuals in the industry have been very beneficial for my future. I already have some numbers and recommendations lined up for possible internships at a wind manufacturing company located in Lenexa, for next summer. Overall I learned more than I ever thought I would while working at CEP, and made some very strong friendships and connections in the process. I hope to continue working there as long as I can.

www.climateandenergy.org - Home Page

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHeSzDADgCM> - "Where Does Kansas Stand?" - youtube

<http://maps.google.com/maps?client=safari&rls=en&q=kansas%20speaks-%20wind%20energy&oe=UTF-8&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=wl> - Interactive Map