

**West Central Clean Energy Resource Team synopsis of:
New London Community Energy Rally
Thursday, April 16th, 2009, 1- 4 pm
The Little Theater, 24 Central Ave E. New London, MN**

See pictures from the day here: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mncerts/sets/72157617787956481>

We kicked off the event with a fabulous song from the 2009 YES! Team... it was a great performance with a great message: Use what you need, save what you don't. Do it for the future!

Mayor Bill Gossman then welcomed the group and turned it over to Little Theatre Board co-Chairs, Ginny Lief and Julie Dale. Both described the incredible effort of the two YES Teams who have adopted the Little Theatre project, done the research needed to assess the energy saving opportunities, presented this plan to the board and even done the fundraising to pay for the insulation and metal roof upgrades. They highlighted three key lessons they've learned from the YES teams efforts – 1) believe in the project, 2) make a greener choice and 3) funding will come.

Jerry Tedrow, local teacher and historian, then gave the group a sense of the Little Theatre's history. It was built as a community center in 1921 for a total cost of \$7,000. Since then it's served as a venue for roller skating, pro wrestling, movies, basketball and theater events. The community has come together to refurbish and revamp the Little Theatre before; it was time to do it again.

The YES! 2008 Team then gave an overview of the Little Theatre Project, how they picked the project and the key areas they focused upon: lighting, insulation and wind power. They recommended that all of the incandescent lighting be replaced with CFLs. They also gathered information about CFLs – including that they can be recycled and that while they do contain mercury that it's less mercury that would be emitted from a coal power plant if using an incandescent. They also noted that Main Street Hardware in New London both sells and recycles the bulbs. On insulation, they recommended that the exterior walls on three sides of the theater be insulated and bypasses/air leakage points sealed. The team also looked at the possibility of installing vertical axis wind turbines as a long-term project to power the theatre.

WC CERT Steering Committee members then presented The Little Theatre and the two YES! teams with a BIG CHECK for their efforts, and New London Community member, and WC CERT Steering Committee member, Becky West gave a rousing community call to action. Becky reminded the group that as a community we have power and that our power together is greater than the sum of its parts.

The YES! 2009 Team then presented their work to date. In addition to their continued work with the Little Theatre, they've launched a number of other initiatives, including launching their www.LetsGoGreen.biz website for folks to order "green" products. They've also been working to serve local foods at theatre events, working to get community members to use gift bags instead of wrapping paper (note: 3 bags could save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields).

Then it was time for a quick break to tour the outside of the Little Theatre building, check out the fabulous work that Kevin Welsh has been doing to insulate the building, and to enjoy some local caramel corn.

Mayor Bill Gossman and Jim Dyer reconvened the festivities with an original song. We then broke into four small groups to discuss potential next steps for energy activities in New London. Below are a few highlights from the four breakouts.

Energy Efficiency in Local Businesses

Jill Curran, program manager from Energy Smart <http://www.mnenergysmart.com/> facilitated this discussion. Jill emphasized the tremendous existing incentives that utilities had for local businesses – including places like the Little Theatre – and described how Energy Smart works with local businesses to tap these resources. The group also discussed the array of federal tax incentives now available (energystar.gov/taxcredits). A good on-line resource for a wide variety of energy incentives – federal, state and utility – is the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy: <http://www.dsireusa.org/>.

Before leaving for the day, Jill was already making calls about potential incentives for the Little Theatre!

Energy Efficiency in the residential sector

Lissa Pawlisch, from CERTs, met with a number of YES! students from both the 2008 and 2009 teams. It was a great chance for them to share stories, lessons learned, and a few tips for how to leave a record of what they'd done for the next year. All noted that since they had become involved with YES! that they were more aware of energy issues and were doing more in their lives to "be green". We talked about the potential for a campaign to get other students and other community members thinking about saving energy. One YES! team from another community was issuing Friday morning text messages with energy saving tips to their classmates. One New London community member said he thought his neighbors would be much more responsive to a plea from students to be more efficient than any one else!

Wind Energy

Dennis Williams from Next Generation Power Systems and his colleague Scott Doefler had their work cut out for them talking about everything from small wind – include vertical axis turbines – to community-based utility scale wind development and did a great job fielding questions from participants on the ins and outs of wind development.

Solar Energy

Dave Pederson, executive director at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center walked group members through the options for solar PV and solar thermal – drawing on his experience installing both technologies @ Prairie Woods – both of which are just a heart-beat away from New London. ☺ Dave walked folks through options that could be duplicated @ the Little Theatre, and the group is now thinking about how they could install a solar thermal system on the south side of the building – and do so in conjunction with other students at the New London Spicer High School.

All in all it was a tremendous afternoon – and very engaging cadre of students. Kudos to all of the work the YES! students have done and to all of the community members who've been supporting them and leading their own charge to get things going. Well done!