Video by Luther College highlights positive impact of clean energy in Decorah, Iowa

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Energy Department launched the "Clean Energy in Our Community" video series, which will feature small communities throughout the country that are striving to become more sustainable, are investing in the green economy, and are bringing the benefits of clean energy to local residents and workers. The Energy Department kicked off the series with a video from Luther College that highlights how Decorah, Iowa is benefiting from the projects undertaken by the college to reduce their energy consumption and deploy clean, renewable energy projects campus-wide.

"'Clean Energy in Our Community' will highlight small communities around the country working to promote clean renewable energy initiatives and how our colleges and universities in particular play a critical role in shaping our communities and driving America's clean energy economy," said U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. "Luther College and Decorah, Iowa, are great examples of how our local communities can help lead the way in making sure that America wins the global clean energy race."

Many community partnerships are emerging due to the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment . This commitment requires signatory colleges and universities to make sustainability a part of every student's learning experience and to achieve carbon neutrality at some point in the future. The program has had broad impacts not only on the college and university campuses involved, but also in the communities as a whole.

For example, the Luther College Board of Regents recently committed the school to cutting its carbon footprint in half by 2015 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Luther has already reduced its carbon footprint 22% through various energy efficiency initiatives. Now it is investing in clean renewable energy. Last fall, Luther installed a 1.6 megawatt wind turbine . This summer Luther established the largest zero-emission facility in Iowa by using a 280 KW solar field to power a
100 plus student residential housing complex
that uses geothermal energy to heat and cool the facility. Luther has also created an
Office of Sustainability
that helps the college prioritize projects to meet its goals.

"To work toward carbon neutrality, the college will evaluate additional major initiatives, including investments in LED lighting technology, centralized or decentralized cogeneration of electricity and heat, as well as more use of solar thermal and solar electric technologies," President Richard Torgerson, Luther College said. "Advances in new technologies, coupled with conservation initiatives, will play a major role in achieving these ambitious goals."

The wider community has embraced Luther’s investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. The City of Decorah only has a population of 8,000 people but many residents, businesses, and non-profit institutions have been taking steps to make the community more sustainable. The city has three Energy Star Certified Buildings and several others may soon become certified. In addition, the recently created Winneshiek Energy District has helped area residents invest more than $1 million dollars in energy efficiency programs over the past two years.

The Energy Department is committed to supporting communities like Decorah as they invest in clean renewable energy that reduces carbon pollution, creates local jobs and helps to drive local economies. This series will help connect and feature our small communities nationwide that are investing in clean energy and playing a role in making sure the United States leads the world in the global race for the green jobs of the future.

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