

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Raising Energy Career Awareness Helps Raise Cash for Illinois Teachers; Energizing High School Students in Colorado; At Gulf Power, A Day in the Life of an Energy Worker; How to Make Every Day a “Careers in Energy” Day!; What We’re Reading; Upcoming Events

## Highlights from Careers in Energy Week

CEWD and member companies began working together to create a Careers in Energy Week in 2010. The purpose is to increase the public’s awareness about energy careers through a concerted nationwide effort. This provides an opportunity for energy companies to connect with their local communities by sponsoring special events where schools, families, and other businesses can learn more about how their energy companies operate and the importance they have in the local economy.

This year’s Careers in Energy Week ran October 12-18. Twenty Consortia hosted events, including plant tours, energy camps, lineworkers visiting local schools, and video contests, with many state governors signing proclamations. This month’s newsletter features a few of these events. For a full list of events, go to: <http://www.cewd.org/toolkits/CareersWeek/events/2015.php>.

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Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD)©

## Raising Energy Career Awareness Helps Raise Cash for Illinois Teachers

When the Illinois Energy Workforce Consortium began its statewide outreach to middle and high school teachers as part of Careers in Energy Week, it wanted some way to determine how its efforts were being received.

So the committee decided to offer cash prizes to teachers who not only used its materials, but could show how they were being used.

One teacher sent in a picture of her students using the Get Into Energy website. Another sent a picture of students in an Agricultural Mechanics class who researched careers in the energy industry, as well as different types of energy and how they worked. A third took pictures of students trying to “think like engineers” as they worked in teams to solve engineering problems.

“We created the contest to see what kind of traction we were getting and to see how teachers were integrating the materials we supplied about energy careers in the classroom,” said Margi Schiemann, Director of Infrastructure Programs and Support, Nicor Gas, and lead on the career awareness committee for the state consortium. “We also know that teachers spend a lot of their own money in the classroom, so we thought a classroom grant would draw teachers to participate.”

Last year's three winners earned \$200 apiece to use in their classrooms, said Schiemann. But teachers who win this year will each receive \$250, in an effort to increase participation. The Consortium will also be sending out reminders prompting teachers to enter the contest as the December 11 deadline approaches, and reaching a broader audience using the state Department of Education's blast email list of teachers across the state.

But the Consortium's marketing efforts—which also included a proclamation from Governor Bruce Rauner—are only part of the campaign that took place during Careers in Energy Week in Illinois. In addition to the Consortium's efforts, Nicor Gas holds its own activities, said Schiemann, some of which take place all year long.

"Careers in Energy Week is just one component of our overall career awareness campaign," she said, noting that Nicor Gas has a web page for teachers and students that includes job descriptions at the utility and pictures of employees engaged in their jobs. It also has a link for games and activities for teachers and students, and a place where teachers can request classroom speakers from the utility to talk to the students about energy careers. Nicor Gas employees have attended more than 30 career awareness events so far this year, reaching 30,000 students and teachers.

Nicor Gas has also leveraged its energy efficiency program—energySMART—to promote energy careers. This year, energySMART's elementary education program will reach more than 8,500 students in about 430 classrooms. Energy efficiency kits are provided to students with items they can take home, such as water aerators, low-flow showerheads, and shower timers for their parents to install. During the energy efficiency presentation, Nicor Gas makes a point to include messages about energy careers, as well as posters that include career information for teachers to display in classrooms, Schiemann said. "We look for every opportunity to maximize our existing resources to spread the word about the exciting and dynamic energy industry," she explained.

Nicor Gas also sends employees to take part in energy-related events during Careers in Energy Week, she said. For example, this year, employees attended five events between October 12-18, including one at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, where they spoke to museum visitors during a program called "Science Works: Cool Jobs, Hot Careers."

They also attended the annual STEMfest at Northern Illinois University. Combined, these events drew nearly 13,000 visitors.

During the month of October, Nicor Gas also has employee ambassadors attending local fire department open houses to speak to kids about energy and safety. This year, the company gave away thousands of yellow safety vests at 60 fire departments and held activities for the kids to earn badges they could affix to the vests. One badge challenged kids to "Picture Themselves (in a career) at Nicor Gas."

Finally, Nicor Gas purchased digital ads on sites such as the Daily Herald, Shaw Media, and LinkedIn, directing online visitors to the jobs section of the utility's website.

"We've been engaging in career awareness activities for the past three years," said Schiemann, "and each year our efforts have grown more robust."

## Energizing High School Students in Colorado

Careers in Energy Week was a busy time in Colorado this year. Governor John W. Hickenlooper issued a proclamation recognizing the energy industry, while at Black Hills Energy, students listened to employees describe the paths they took to get to their current jobs. Over at Xcel Energy, students engaged in hands-on activities such as fusing pipe and conducting static electricity, as well as watching lineworkers practice "dead man" rescue operations.

Meanwhile, in classrooms all over the state, students listened to short video messages from six utilities on what it's like to work in the energy industry. In addition to Xcel and Black Hills, they heard from Colorado Springs Utilities, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Colorado Electric Association, and the Platte River Power Authority. The message was consistent and upbeat: Come work in our industry. It's exciting and we have jobs for you!

"Our whole focus is to bring awareness to the high school students because right now they don't really have us on their radar," said Beverly Brown, Director of Inclusion and Engagement, Xcel Energy, and a member of the Colorado Energy Workforce Consortium's executive board. "They take it for granted when they flip a switch that electricity is generated. We want them to know where that energy comes from and that, hey, Xcel is a cool place to work.

"Once we get that message across," she said, "we can move the needle up and have students do four hours of apprenticeship training with us to get a more in-depth look at what it's like to work here."

Brown said the video messages were sent to teachers all over the state as part of an effort by the Consortium to reach as many students as possible. Securing the Governor's proclamation was also a joint effort by the six utilities. But each company also developed individual programs for teachers and students in their regions, such as the hands-on activities at Xcel.

Showing students the kinds of jobs they could be doing is a critical component to career awareness, Brown said, because these are the jobs the utilities will soon have to fill. "We're going to hire a lot of people here over the next 5-10 years," she said, "and we want these students to be a part of that."

## At Gulf Power, A Day in the Life of an Energy Worker

Like many utilities, Gulf Power has a tough time resonating with the younger generations, and an even tougher time recruiting young people who represent diverse populations. So when October rolls around, they capitalize on Careers in Energy Week to do a little bit of both.

October also happens to coincide with Blacks in Energy Awareness Month, an event sponsored by the American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE). Working in partnership with AABE, Gulf Power has developed a best practice that invites high school students (grades 10-12) from two counties in its service area to visit the utility for a day and interact with minority engineers and energy workers so they can see firsthand what it's like to work for the company. While the program is open to all students, a special emphasis is placed upon encouraging minority student attendance.

"This is a great event and of course we're always looking for ways to reach out to underrepresented populations," said Kristie Kelley, Workforce Development Coordinator, Gulf Power, and Chair of the Florida Energy Workforce Consortium (FEWC).

Kelley said the event has been so successful for Gulf Power over the past seven years that they're now going to replicate it in other regions and with other utilities and schools in the FEWC. "It's one of our goals for 2016," she said.

Students who attend the one-day sessions at Gulf Power work on engineering projects such as building bridges with popsicle sticks or baskets with toothpicks that are strong enough to hold objects such as tennis balls. They take part in role-playing skits in which they learn about (and then communicate) the different jobs available in the energy industry. And they have an opportunity to speak with engineers, lineworkers, power plant operators, and others at the utility about the career paths they took to get to their current jobs.

“Basically what they’re learning about is what a day in the life of an energy worker is like,” said Kelley. “It intrigues them. It encourages them to consider the possibility of working in the energy industry and helps them make a connection with us, so they can come back later and ask more questions. We encourage them to keep in touch.”

Students in the program also learn about scholarship opportunities available to them through AABE, which offers high school seniors with a B average and an interest in pursuing an energy career the opportunity to apply for a \$3,000 college scholarship (and the potential to compete for an additional \$5,000 scholarship).

As part of Careers in Energy Week, FEWC also holds a video contest each year. High school students (grades 9-12) are invited to submit videos around the theme, “Did you know? Facts About the Energy Industry.” The top three winners earn cash prizes and have their videos posted on the [FEWC website](#).

## How to Make Every Day a “Careers in Energy” Day!

Are you looking for ways to engage kids all year long? CEWD has a wealth of tools to support your organization in promoting the energy industry and its great careers. Here’s just a few:

[Get Into Energy Summer Camp](#): Try hosting a Get Into Energy camp next summer! CEWD has everything you need, from planning templates to sample flyers, for offering a three-day camp where student can learn about energy careers and get hands-on science experiences. Start planning now!

[Get Into Energy/Get Into STEM Lesson Plans](#): Geared towards elementary school students, these hands-on activities are sure to get them excited about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

[STEM Reading is Power!](#): Are you looking for something to do with middle school students? This reading program gets kids reading more, specifically in the STEM arena.

[Mentoring Toolkit](#): Mentoring is a way to not only connect with local youth, but share what makes working in the energy industry a smart choice. This toolkit provides you with a set of tools and templates you can use to launch or improve on one you already have in place.

[ShopCEWD](#): Order Careers in Energy posters or booklets to bring with you on your visits to local schools or when you host programs at your company.

## What We're Reading

[Changing Community Colleges: Early Lessons from Completion by Design](#)

MDRC

[Working While Learning: The New Normal](#)

Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, McCourt School of Public Policy

[Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing](#)

American Association of University Women

[Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works](#)

McKinsey & Company

### Upcoming

**Every Wednesday; Wonder Woman Wednesdays Sponsored by Energetic Women**

Nominate your friends and colleagues! For more information, contact Lauren Freathy at [laurenf@midwestenergy.org](mailto:laurenf@midwestenergy.org).

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