



EAST STUDENTS TAKE THE CHALLENGE

About a year ago I was asked by a group of high school students from Star City to make an energy efficiency presentation to them and to citizens in their community.

I told them that I would be glad to do that and we set a date. This request seemed very unusual to me because in all the years that I had been teaching about energy efficiency, I had never been asked by students to make such a presentation. And for the students to include the whole community was certainly a first. I wasn't sure just what to expect, but I knew that I could talk about energy efficiency for as much time as they would allow. I received a call from David McCoy of C & L Electric Cooperative who told me that he would be present to assist as needed. That certainly eased my mind as I figured that he would know just about everyone in attendance.

As I parked my automobile at the community center, I was met by eight super-polite young men and women. I was immediately impressed. As they assisted me in carrying and setting up my teaching displays, they started asking questions and I started teaching. I was enjoying every minute because these young folks really seemed to want to learn about energy efficiency. As we talked, adults from the community began to enter the room. The audience was served a light lunch by the students, and I taught for about 45 minutes. Each time that I would try to end the session, someone would ask another question. Let me just say that it was a great experience.

Well, this was my first introduction to a school program called the EAST Initiative. I think EAST is just wonderful. EAST stands for Environmental and Spatial Technologies. This program teaches that all students have value and deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their value to their school and community. It was after this meeting that I began to think that perhaps we need to spend more time teaching energy efficiency to young folks. We had results from that meeting. Several of the attending adults called me at the office asking me where to get the products, such as cellulose insulation and window tinting, that I had discussed. One of

the calls came from the dad of one of the students. The dad had not attended the meeting, but the student told him how to solve an energy problem at their house.

Since that first meeting, I have made a presentation to the statewide EAST faculty members, as requested by Ozarks Electric Cooperative in Fayetteville. I then made a presentation to the EAST students at Lakeside High School in Hot Springs, as requested by First Electric Cooperative. Then it was on to Harrisburg High School as requested by Craighead Electric Cooperative. Two days later, I taught EAST students at Morrilton High School, again at the request of First Electric Cooperative. All of these meetings went well, and I was totally impressed with the behavior and interest of the students.

I knew, however, that the subject of energy efficiency couldn't possibly be exciting to these young students unless they could see that results came from their efforts. I have seen young folks go on mission trips where they actually performed manual labor to help improve a family's house. They received great satisfaction from their work and talked about it for weeks. So, I thought, why not teach these students exactly how to make a house more efficient? We had an EAST presentation scheduled for Nov. 15 at the Hillcrest District High School in Lynn. I called my friends Monty Williams and Becky Carter at Craighead Electric Cooperative and asked what they thought about using some of the students to actually demonstrate how to do caulking and other energy improvements. They thought that it was a great idea, and after discussing it with their boss, decided that we could challenge the EAST students to find a suitable house that needed energy improvements. If they did that, we would spend a full day with the students making energy improvements on the house. Well, they accepted the challenge, and I can't wait to give these fine students some hands-on experience so that they can help others. Of course, you know that I am, as always, challenging you to make your improvements. Call me at the office at 501-653-7931 if you need help or visit www.SmartEnergyTips.org.

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video or ask energy efficiency-related questions, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug's columns, can also be found at www.SmartEnergyTips.org.