

2011 ENERGY FAIR

Cabrillo academy students show final projects

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WATSONVILLE Karen Geisterfer walked around Watsonville Plaza carrying a blender containing a murky mixture of paper and water Saturday.

Two toy cars running on solar batteries zipped by while bystanders enjoyed fruit smoothies mixed in the same way as Geisterfer's concoction — in a blender powered by a woman riding a bicycle.

Geisterfer was one of 24 students from the Cabrillo College Summer Energy Academy whose final projects were part of the 2011 Energy Fair, which also included other governmental or community agencies dedicated to sustainable living.

It was the fourth year of the event, which Sue Tappero, the academy's director, said is geared toward bringing information about the importance of renewable energy to the South County.

"This fair is a community service project," said Tappero, in between conducting exit interviews with the academy students. "We want to get the word out to the community about how renewable energy relates to them, and how they can help change the direction of our current energy picture."

Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, the academy is a four-week session that began July 25 and ran from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. five days a week. Held in the physics lab at Cabrillo College, the academy is geared toward both incoming freshmen and continuing students that are interested in potentially transferring to a four-year university to major in one of the sciences.

Geisterfer, who will begin her



Yesenia Molina provides the power to churn a batch of Karen Geisterfer's paper pulp Saturday at Cabrillo's Energy Fair at the Watsonville Plaza.

third year at Cabrillo at the end of the month, partnered with two other students on an exhibit that demonstrated how to recycle paper. Under the guidance of a teacher's assistant, the group blended torn scrap paper and water into a consistency that connected the scraps' fibers together.

"After you blend it, you pour the mixture into a wire frame that allows you to drain out all the water and connect all the paper parts together," Geisterfer said. "Once you have a good amount, you flip the frame



onto a towel and leave it out to dry overnight."

The students had one week to come up with the ideas for their



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Ari Kaplan primes a solar-hydro pump Saturday at the Cabrillo energy fair in Watsonville.

exhibits, conduct research and then build their projects from scratch.

Geisterfer's group first started with tissue paper before discovering its thickness was too fine. Newspaper made the final color a little too gray for Geisterfer, who, along with the rest of the group, decided that a variety of colored paper scraps was the way to go.

Attending the academy proved to be an eye-opening experience for Geisterfer.

"I didn't really know much about technology or science before the academy, which I think is really the point of the academy," Geisterfer said. "I've always been attracted to learning about things I don't know much about, and I learned a lot."

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Caleb Ketterer rolls past the solar cells that charged his electric scooter at the Cabrillo energy fair in Watsonville Saturday.

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