

Join a Trip to Tilt at Pigeon's Windmills

JULY 20, 2009

- What:** Harvest Wind Farm Tour
When: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8
Where: Car pool leaves from Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center), 1517 Bayliss Street in Midland and tours a wind turbine farm in the Thumb town of Pigeon
How much: \$45 for members, \$49 for non-members with reservations due by Monday, Aug. 3.
Information: Call 989-837-1885 or visit www.bcreative360.org

[Midland] Rising above 3,200-acres of sugar beet and soybean fields outside the small Thumb village of Pigeon is a possible key to America's future source of energy.

Called the Harvest Wind Farm, in late 2007 its 32 gleaming white wind turbines began humming and continually rotating their faces toward the wind as they collect energy purchased by a utility company in Cadillac. Each three-blade windmill is 397 feet tall, and the housing unit holding its mechanics is the size of a bus.

And within sight of them, at Laker Elementary School, a trio of smaller turbines have, since 2006, provided the school with 80 percent of its annual energy demand for a savings of \$34,000 a year.

On Saturday, Aug. 8, Midland's Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) will lead a day-long trip to the area where Brion Dickens, a renewable energy entrepreneur who lives in Pigeon, will discuss both the school project and the bigger wind farm which is owned by John Deere Wind Energy.

Participants will car pool for the hour-long drive and provide their own lunch. The day runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cameras are welcome.

It was Dickens and his wife, Kathy, who wrote the \$265,000 grant proposal to build four turbines and a solar array to collectively power the school and a home owned by the Laker School District.

Kathy is a school employee and Brion a general contractor and educator who, at the school, involves its students with renewable energy projects. In 2008, the *Detroit Free Press* named them the “greenest couple in Michigan.”

As for the 32 wind farm turbines, the power they generate is purchased by the Wolverine Power Cooperative of Cadillac, considered one of the greenest utility companies in the Midwest. Newspaper reports say the turbines cost \$90 million to build and that the project is the state’s first commercial wind farm.

Huron County farmers leased their land to John Deere for the windmill plots and are sharing in the sale of the power generated by them. With a total capacity of 53 megawatts, the turbines can power more than 15,000 homes.

Michigan has five other wind turbine installations in operation. An ongoing installation of 46 of them in Ubly, south of Bad Axe, will become the largest wind farm in all of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

About Creative 360

Creative 360, formerly known as Creative Spirit Center, is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center’s mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, psychological and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Summer 2009 highlights in addition to the Harvest Wind Farm tour, include the art exhibit *Clear Water*, art camps for children and youth, and two performances of Shakespeare’s “Comedy of Errors” in a new outdoor performance pavilion. Schedules showing all classes and events at Creative 360 are available at no charge. Telephone 837-1885 to have schedules delivered to your business or location, or mailed to your home.

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