

AmerenUE offers Pure Power alternative

BY NICK WILSEY
Index Staff

Kirkville's electricity provider has made it a breeze for its customers to harness wind to heat and power their homes.

AmerenUE introduced Pure Power, a renewable energy initiative, more than two months ago, spokeswoman Annette Sweet said.

"[Pure Power is] a voluntary program that would allow AmerenUE customers to purchase what they call renewable energy credits for your home or business," Sweet said. "[A third party company] will purchase power on your behalf to feed into the Midwest power grid from certified renewable sources – generally in the Midwest that would be wind."

Customers can sign up for Pure Power online to pay a voluntary premium of one and a half cents for each kilowatt-hour on their monthly bill, so an extra \$15 or so would be added to the average household's \$60 electric bill, Sweet said.

She said AmerenUE's customers receive about 70 percent of their electrical power from coal-fired plants, 25 percent from the nuclear plant in Callaway, Mo., and 5 percent from two hydroelectric plants – Bagnell Dam at the Lake of the Ozarks and Keokuk Dam on the Mississippi River.

Sweet said Missouri isn't an ideal place for wind or solar power because of its relatively low, inconsistent wind speed and cloudier-than-average skies. However, a few wind farms in the Midwest supply power to the grid and more are being constructed or proposed all the time, including one potential farm in Adair County.

"At any one time it's really hard to tell, but there's some [renewable energy sources] that we're probably more likely to buy from just because of their physical proximity," she said.

Alternative energy sources face a road block because they still are less cost-efficient than current energy sources, Sweet said.

"Renewable energy costs more than the traditional coal, nuclear and the old hydroelectric plants, so as a result, unless people are willing to pay the premium for it, it's hard to get it going," she said. "It's hard to have a financial incentive for someone to build a wind farm or build a renewable energy source."

Sweet said the future of renewables still might be bright.

"The more companies build different types of alternative energy generation, then like a lot of other things, you would assume the cost per unit will eventually come down, but it may take years to do that," she said.

However, professor of biology Michael Kelrick said the cost of renewables isn't as high as the cost of sticking with fossil fuels.

"Here in the United States we enjoy an enormous amount of energy subsidization ... [that disguises] the real cost, and that isn't even addressing the environmental cost," he said.

Kelrick said another road block simply might be human nature.

"I think what's driving a lot of the

decision-making is short-term rather than long-term considerations," Kelrick said. "[Switching to renewables] would cause very serious hardships for some people and would cause a major loss of privilege for a lot of other people, and people don't readily make those sorts of decisions."

As a result, the government isn't doing enough to promote renewable energy, Kelrick said.

"It's not like our government in its energy policy doesn't acknowledge the need for conservation, the need for research on renewables, but as a fraction of the total package, it's like a dust bunny in the corner," he said. "I mean, it's lip service to some degree or another."

Despite the country's general reluctance, Kelrick said he is an active supporter of renewable energy.

"The way I operate, I've got like 30 irons in the fire simultaneously," Kelrick said. "I'm working every angle I can possibly imagine regarding anything having to do with sustainability here on campus. I work with many students on many different fronts because not all of them are going to be productive and because students have a wide range of interests."

One way to bring sustainability to campus might involve a program like Pure Power, Kelrick said.

"Here at Truman, I might be willing to advocate for ... a student fee, which is what was going on at many

universities where students have voted ... to pay a premium for renewable source energy," he said.

Kelrick said Pure Power is a step in the right direction.

"I'm really glad AmerenUE has a program like this, and I'm really glad to see that institutions like Truman State University can buy megawatt-hour blocks ... of renewable energy source electricity," Kelrick said. "It means our University could make some sort of decision ... to provide some version of carbon offset at whatever level of commitment they choose."

However, senior Brett Wiley, president emeritus of Environmental Campus Organization and campus environment chairman for Student Senate, said Ameren might have an agenda beyond sustainability with Pure Power.

"I think right now being environmentally friendly is a trend in the business world, and people are trying to latch onto it to increase public opinion," Wiley said. "Especially after Ameren destroyed a state park in southern Missouri with the Taum Sauk Dam, they need to do as much as they can to increase public opinion in their favor."

Wiley said he thinks Ameren's sustainability projects might even be cancelled out.

"Ameren, sure they're having third parties providing renewable energy, and that's great," he said. "But at the same time, are they building more coal plants? Because if that's the case, there's no point."

Wiley said he is working with Kelrick and Senate's campus environment committee to promote renew-

able energy at Truman.

"We need to be taking steps to reduce our energy needs," he said. "A lot of universities are doing the same things, and Truman is far behind the steps that have been in place at other universities."

Wiley said that next semester he plans to survey students about environmental issues. Although he said he doesn't think students would want to pay another fee, an alternative approach would be to introduce sustainability into the general curriculum.

"[For example,] physics students could be working on lab right now building solar panels," Wiley said. "Maybe that would inspire them to talk to the campus planner and the Physical Plant to implement the panels they're building."

But Wiley said he doesn't want the drive for renewable energy to end at the nation's borders.

"By the time I die, I'd like to see the majority of the world's energy supplied by renewable sources," Wiley said. "Just one example of how effective renewable energy could be, if you covered the state of Nevada with solar panels, you could have enough energy to supply the entire United States. Think of all the rooftops we have in the United States, ... and that's more than the area of Nevada."

Wiley said renewable energy will save not only the environment but perhaps humankind itself.

"With coal plants, you have to mine the coal, there are a lot of workers that get black lung disease and a lot of communities ... are destroyed because it exposes this open-mine pit," he said. "It's a huge environmental health and social justice issue."

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Brett Wiley
President Emeritus of Environmental Campus Organization

Ice Ice Baby



Jackson Groves/Index

A winter storm that swept through Kirkville on Saturday morning left much of the city's flora covered in ice. Kirkville has been put under a snow advisory until 9 p.m. tonight, and residents can expect one to three inches of snow accumulation.

Senate names students to fee review committee

BY JESSIE GASCH
Managing Editor

Student Senate appointed seven people to the Organizational Activities Fee committee Sunday.

The OAF committee, formed every three years, is charged with examining the use of the currently \$72-per-year activities fee and recommending changes to the recipients: the Student Activities Board, Student Senate, the Collegiate Readership Program and the Funds Allotment Council, which allocates money to student organizations.

The committee also can recommend an increase or decrease to the fee, Senate President junior Matt Szewczyk said.

"[A fee increase or decrease] actually goes through an approval of the student body, so depending on when this committee finishes up its report, ... it will either be on the April or fall ballot," Szewczyk said.

He said the committee will examine budgets and expenditures to determine whether organizations have been using their money effectively. Last year the activities fee yielded about \$200,000, Szewczyk said.

"[The OAF committee members] take a look at what the organizations are doing in the last three years," Szewczyk said. "... It's a long enough time just so organizations have time to have reacted from the previous year's committee."

He said that since receiving a report from the 2004-05 OAF committee, Senate has made some changes.

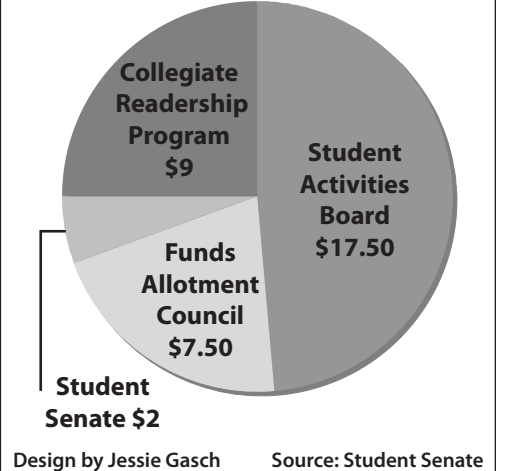
"We have worked on decreasing the percentage of our rollover budget, also making sure all of our minutes and other important documents that come out from the Senate are posted promptly on the Senate Web site," he said.

The committee is composed of four student-at-large members, one of whom is the chairperson, and one representative each from Senate, FAC and SAB. The previous committee had two representatives from each organization, for a total of 10 members, but it recommended a change in its composition. The change reflects increased influence from the general student body, Szewczyk said.

"We also tried to pull [OAF members] from different corners of the student body," he said.

Sophomore Stephanie Kwon is the SAB representative on the OAF committee. She said the committee is a vehicle for gathering student input.

\$36 Activities Fee



"The goal is to see how students see us and what they think we can do better," Kwon said.

She said that although she represents SAB, she will take into account the interests of all the recipients of the activities fee.

"We're not just going to be for more money, it's so we get the appropriate amount in accordance with the student input," Kwon said. "With knowledge of what Senate does, what FAC does, and just seeing how what [SAB] does will play into how our activities fee is used."

She said she will confer with freshman Morgan Sachs, another member of SAB, who does not have voting rights but who plans to attend and contribute to the OAF committee meetings.

"I think a lot of people are starting to investigate where their money is going, which is good, it's always good to know how your money is being used and if it's effective," Sachs said. "I just think that's why this board is a necessity."

Senior Erin Zevely wasn't sure how much the activities fee was and wasn't sure how it differed from the athletics fee. Once she knew the distribution of the funds, she said she might support an increase.

"Depending on how much they need a semester, and [if] the University isn't giving them enough money, I can see where there might be a need for an increase," Zevely said.

Szewczyk said that because of the jump in the number of requests from student organizations to FAC, he would support an increase in its funding.

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