

Posted on Sat, Oct 6, 2007

## Sisters for clean energy

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*Courtesy of Community Energy*

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, the 700-member congregation based in Aston, joins a number of organizations in the growing trend toward purchasing renewable energy.

At the end of last month, Dutch financial services group, ING, announced their choice to purchase emission-free wind energy credits for its American offices as neighboring officials in Montgomery County have done the same.

"I think it speaks to a broad-based interest in clean renewable energy," Paul Copleman, public relations manager for the Radnor-based Community Energy Inc. that is providing the wind energy, said.

The order has agreed to purchase enough wind energy to offset 100 percent of their electric usage, allowing 2,168,400 kilowatt-hour of wind-generated electricity to enter the national grid on their behalf.

Wind energy is generated through the use of specially designed wind turbines that work similar to windmills. This energy is then transferred to the national power grid.

This grid is fed from a variety of sources, such as nuclear, coal or wind. Every time electricity is used, the grid becomes depleted and needs to be filled.

When an individual or organization purchases wind-generated energy, their electric use is replaced with energy created from wind turbines, reducing the need of electricity for non-renewable sources.

Community Energy officials said up to 25 percent of the United States' energy needs could be created through the use of wind energy.

The Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia said it's simply a matter of aligning their daily routine with their mission.

"It's pleasing to know that our day-to-day operations are now being powered by clean, renewable energy," Sister Corinne Wright, OSF, Director of Environmental Initiatives, said. "We hope others will follow our lead and make the choice as well."

The Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia was formed after the former Anna Boll Bachmann became widowed in 1851 in Philadelphia. She opened a hostel for immigrants with the help of her sister, Barbara, who sewed for a tailor.

With their guest, Anna Dorn, they petitioned Bishop John Neumann in Rome to begin a religious congregation. In 1855, that request was granted. Since then, the sisters have committed their activities to helping others, especially the economically poor, marginalized and oppressed. Their environmental stance emanates from their belief that Jesus came as a brother to all created reality,

not just humanity.

The impact from the amount of wind energy the sisters are purchasing is equivalent to planting about 1,200 acres of trees or not driving more than 3.3 million miles.

This move will not affect Neumann College, which was founded by the order, at present, Steve Bell, executive director of marketing and communications for the college, said.

However, it may be a part of its future.

"There are plans to review the use of wind power during the upcoming budget process," Bell said, adding that that procedure begins next month.

As part of its goal to become carbon-neutral by the end of the year, ING agreed last month to purchase wind energy credits equivalent to 100 percent of its electricity usage at its locations across the United States.

The 70 million kilowatt-hour purchase will power sites for ING's 10,000 employees in more than 100 offices from Scottsdale, Arizona to West Chester, Pa. Also in September, the Montgomery County commissioners entered an agreement with Community Energy to power all of the county's electrical accounts with emission-free, renewable power, becoming the first 100 percent wind-powered county, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

At the time, Commissioner James R. Matthews said, "Montgomery County continues to tackle the very serious threat of climate change. Eliminating the county's greenhouse gas emissions from our electricity use sets a positive example that not only benefits our residents, but serves as a blueprint for other counties and towns to follow."

Copleman discussed the shift from non-renewable to renewable sources of energy.

"What we've seen is a lot of forces at work," he said.

Copleman explained that part of the increase is purely customer demand and another attraction is the regulatory changes, as seen in Pennsylvania through the Advanced Energy Portfolio Standard.

In December 2004, Gov. Ed Rendell signed this legislation into law, requiring that 18 percent of all energy generated in Pennsylvania derives from clean, efficient sources within 15 years.

Copleman said Community Energy sources come from a variety of sites across the country and the company provides solar and hydro types, as well.