



Chris Geier / cgeier@chronline.com

John Hofman, center, along with students from a physics class, assemble a wind turbine that was installed on a pole on the Centralia College campus Wednesday.

# Centralia College Installs Wind Turbine to Power Lab

**GOING GREEN: Students Investigate Feasibility of Wind and Solar Energy in Lewis County**

By Amy Nile  
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Students at Centralia College are coordinating a clean energy working lab that will provide electricity for the Kiser Natural Outdoor Learning Lab. The KNOLL will open at the corner of Washington Avenue and Centralia College Boulevard in June.

The lab will feature an energy ball, or state-of-the-art wind turbine, that will produce up to 2,500 watts of energy in ideal conditions. The energy ball, which will produce power when the wind blows at more than six miles per hour, was mounted atop a 45-foot pole on campus Wednesday.

"It's designed for low noise and vibration," said John Hofman, 35, an engineering student who heads the project at Centralia College. "And to be visible to birds so it's environmentally friendly to wildlife as well."

The energy ball will work alongside six 175-watt solar panels. Together, they will produce up to 3,500 watts of power, more than three times the energy needed to run the KNOLL.

Any excess power produced will go back into Centralia City Light's power grid.

"We sell it when we have excess and buy it back when we need it," said Travis Kainney, 27, a student who has worked on the project.

Energy technology students at Centralia College will measure the power production over time and review effects of extended overcast and windless days.

"We'll be able to measure and see what kind of wind and solar

production capabilities we have in our area," said Hofman, who also interns at Centralia City Light. "The students doing the research will have a great thing to put on their resume."

"Also, they'll have hands-on experience," added Kainney.

Former Centralia College staff member Mark Johnson donated funding for the energy ball project.

Hofman said before he started working on green energy projects, he used to be skeptical.

"I'm seeing more potential. I used to be more conservative," he said. "But I've slowly started saying, 'Wow this is some pretty cool stuff.'"

In addition to getting free power generated by the project, the college will also receive rebates from the state based upon actual production of this combined generation system.

"That's a pretty good deal for the college," Hofman said.

The students expect the unit to be operating by June 8, when the college will dedicate the KNOLL in honor of longtime physical science instructor Rufus Kiser.

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A wind turbine now stands at the corner of Washington Avenue and Centralia College Boulevard that will feed electricity into the city's power grid any time the wind is blowing faster than 6.7 miles per hour.

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