

Students Experience Presenting on the Road

Three BMCC students experienced the life of rock stars these past few months, as they spent a lot of time on the road with their "show". Their show did not include head banging music or outrageous costumes; it did however, include chemicals, hotel rooms, a customized bus, solar panels, PowerPoint presentations, a biodiesel processor, and toys powered by the sun.

The students, Gabrielle Ganson, Billy Bernier, and Larry Jacques (student coordinator) were hired to work with the Renewable Energy Center of Excellence project, a USDA-NIFA funded extension project; these students were assisted by Dwight Sargent of the Michigan Inter-Tribal Council and BMCC's Steve Yanni. This project was originally headed by former BMCC Research Director Dr. Michael Doyle.

A total of 18 presentations were delivered to approximately 750 people; the presentation locations included Public School Academies chartered by BMCC, two state universities, youth serving organizations, and Tribal leaders. In addition to the formal presentations, the BMCC Renewable Energy team set up an educational booth at the Michigan Energy Fair in Novi, where their booth was viewed by hundreds over the three days of the fair. While participating in the Michigan Energy Fair our students were able to take part in a presentation by Governor Granholm, where she summarized renewable energy efforts in Michigan and announced numerous grant awards to Michigan renewable energy companies.

Gabrielle, Billy, and Larry spent much of the past winter preparing for the presentations; their corner of the Amik Hall workshop was a busy place, as they completed construction of the biodiesel processor (mounted to a trailer) and learned how to produce biodiesel, secured sources of used vegetable oil, prepared the BMCC "Bio-Bus", fine tuned the PowerPoint presentation, purchased necessary supplies, scheduled their presentations, and made travel arrangements. Larry even obtained his Commercial Drivers License allowing him to drive the Bio-Bus to the various presentation sites around Michigan.

This opportunity provided our students with a comprehensive, real world learning experience from which they will benefit for many years. In addition to the renewable energy technical knowledge obtained, they also developed their presentation preparation and delivery skills, personal management skills, knowledge of the State of Michigan, networking skills, telephone and written communications skills, and knowledge of purchasing and accounting processes. In general, they became very confident and capable young adults of whom BMCC can be very proud; additionally, if you need to know which are the best hotels in Michigan - just ask them!

The Fall of 2010 sees Gabrielle completing her degree at BMCC, while Billy and Larry begin the next stage of their education at Michigan State University. Larry was able to obtain an internship with

the USDA Agriculture Statistics Service which will support his learning at MSU.

