

College Royal offers look into U of G

Tens of thousands of visitors head to university for annual open house

By VIK KIRSCH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Animal and poultry science professor Jim Atkinson had a succinct way of describing a dairy cow with a large plastic ring and cork inserted in its side that allowed a peek inside.

"It's a cow with a window," he told crowds converging Saturday on the University of Guelph campus for the 83rd annual College Royal open house weekend.

Of course, as he did the uncorking, the stench of internal gases quickly filled a corner of the campus cow barn, as did the sight of partially digested

hay bubbling and gurgling up from "Snowflake's" rumen, part of the cow's four-stomach system.

"It's like a baby's diaper," Evonne Cugliari of Ariss said of the unpleasant stench.

"It's gross," her son, Anthony Cugliari, 6 added.

His brother, Matteo Cugliari, 9, was repulsed by a glob of half-digested hay that Atkinson held up for the crowd.

"Yuck! It's all chewed up," Matteo said as Atkinson replaced the handful in the cow.

Asked what he thought of the opening in the large farm animal, which scientists use to test animal feed, Matteo could only say: "It's weird."

His father, Nello Cugliari, thought he could top that.

"What would be weirdest is sticking your hand inside," Cugliari said, not relishing the thought.

The open house drew an estimated 25,000 visitors to campus-wide events, including various animal and crop competitions and displays, square dancing, chemistry and art shows, musical performances and lectures.

New this year was a demonstration of how plants reduce harmful greenhouse gases in the air by absorbing carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. When flood lights were turned on, canola and soybean plants in a sealed plastic box began absorbing carbon dioxide in the air. A gas analyzer sent the data to a computer, which displayed the results on a nearby wall in the crop science building. When the lights were dimmed momentarily, the graph

showed absorption dwindling.

"I think it's excellent. It visually shows you the plants working," said Lou Eurlley of Guelph, there to show his eight-year-old granddaughter, Jeena, how beneficial plants were.

"Plants are a sink for carbon, the same as the ocean," he said.

When fossil fuels burn, they release carbon dioxide in oil drawn from under ground and refined into gasoline. Alternative biofuels from crops and crop byproducts only discharge carbon dioxide previously absorbed from the air by plants, so there's no net increase in harmful gases. That's why many scientists favour biofuels.

Eurlley predicted such biofuels will become more popular as fossil fuels rise in price, as they have lately.

Steve and Sandra Thomson brought their three young daughters, Brittany, Megan and Abigail, with them from

Rockwood to the College Royal, the girls racing around a track on mini John Deere tractors in a rodeo after taking their damaged stuffed toys to a teddy bear clinic at the Ontario Veterinary College.

"They're back in the van recovering," Steve Thomson said with a laugh about the stuffed toys, which needed stitches for "broken limbs."

"I've been coming (to College Royal) since I was a child," he said, drawn each year by all the scientific work being done on campus. "It's a beautiful campus and there's lots of new things they work on."

While the Thomson's have never taken classes there, Sandra Thomson said many of her relatives have studied at the university over the years, so she feels an affinity to it.

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Goin' with the wind

High school wind energy contest draws 200 students from around Ontario

By VIK KIRSCH
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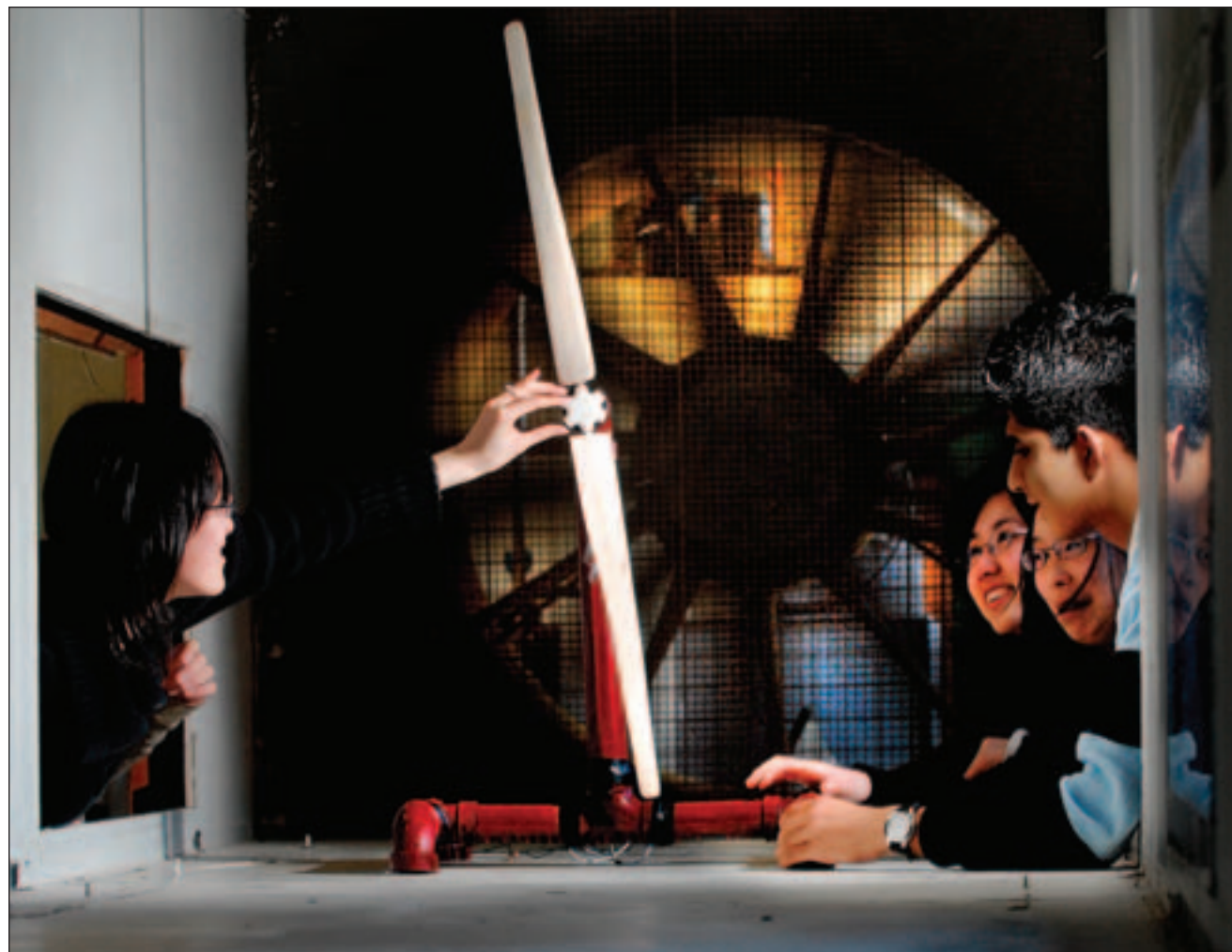
When Sabrina Karim's windmill broke apart in a wind tunnel during the University of Guelph's first high school wind energy contest, her six-member team quickly added glue and duct tape.

But as it began spinning in a second attempt Saturday, she turned away and cringed, facing a wall, unable to watch.

Sure enough, it fell apart again, ending the Catholic Central High School's team attempt to win the contest, which drew 200 students from across Ontario to the campus.

But Karim, a Grade 12 student at the London school, quickly regained her composure.

Competition, she said, only bolstered her desire for a career in engineering because of "the aspects of putting things together, testing and working our way



Members from the Woodland Christian High School team, from left, Eileen Zhou, Lulu Bai, Jolene Tham, and Anish Mistry prepare their homemade windmill for testing Saturday in the wind tunnel during the WindEng competition at the U of G.

through challenges like this one."

Team member Alex Larios Pangtay added the design was sound, but the structure, held by small screws and glue, just wasn't strong enough.

"Now we know what to reinforce," he said, vowing to return next year.

Competitors designed energy-generating wind turbines that were tested in a wind tunnel, their projects evaluated not only on power output, weight and stability, but team oral presentations.

Many chose traditional multi-bladed windmills, but Karim's team glued rows of paper and plastic cups to three square balsa wood panels spinning on a plastic tubing frame, a series of pulleys amplifying the power output.

"We wanted to be more creative," school physics teacher and project adviser John Majska said, reasoning the square panels would work efficiently in the university's square-shaped wind

tunnel.

"Had we been more structurally sound, we could have emerged on top," Majska surmises, unhappy the project didn't hold together. "It's disappointing."

A seven-member team from the Orangeville District Secondary School was in second place most of the afternoon, before finishing the day in fourth. The team entered a more conventional aluminum three-blade system on a vertical axis that produced 2.25 volts.

"We've got a gearing system. It enables our drive shaft to spin much, much faster," Grade 11 team member Steve Brooks explained. "That, in turn, makes our power output a lot higher."

His team, nicknamed The Geek Squad, rejected an initial design similar to Karim's.

"It's a lot less stable," he said, pointing to the London team's experience as proof.

The Geek Squad had a fun afternoon, watching how well competitors were doing through closed circuit television at the university's engineering building.

"It's a great opportunity to learn about wind energy and working together as a team," Brooks said.

Event spokesperson Andrea Woon-Fat said the engineering school wants to repeat the competition annually.

"We want to get some of the students out to learn about alternative energies, engineering and the design process," Woon-Fat said.

Schools in this inaugural year participated from as far as Windsor, though she wasn't sure why none from Guelph were among them.

The top three teams were awarded prizes of money and merchandise worth \$2,000; \$1,000 and \$500.

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City gets funding for solid waste master plan

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The city is getting \$96,000 in federal funds to help create an overdue solid waste master plan.

The grant from the Green Municipal Fund will cover almost half the projected costs of developing the long-term waste management blueprint.

The current version — completed in 1992 — is outdated to the point it prohibits the city from applying for additional green funds to support capital waste-diversion projects.

To qualify for the other cash, the city needs to have a waste audit not more than five years old and a solid waste management plan not more than seven years old.

Guelph's waste management plan was released roughly 15 years ago.

"The (strategic) plan isn't within seven years, which is why we're redoing it," said Dean Wyman, the city's solid waste resources manager.

The city started work on a waste management master plan with Wellington County in 1983 and released the final plan in 1992.

The introduction to the document gives it a scope of 25 years.

"(This) needs to be done right and sometimes when you do it right it does take a little bit of time."

DEAN WYMAN
GUELPH'S SOLID WASTE
RESOURCES MANAGER

In 2005, the previous council voted down an opportunity to include \$200,000 in the budget to begin a new long-term waste plan. The money was included in the 2006 budget.

Councillor Lise Burcher, who voted in favour of funding the plan in 2005, said the unsuccessful vote meant staff weren't able to allocate resources to planning when they were needed.

"As we've seen, that lag in time has created all kinds of problems for us," she said.

A council resolution last May led to the closure of the city's wet plant a month later.

Wyman said the city is currently devising a timeline for developing the waste master plan.

He wouldn't estimate how long the planning process would take, though Tara Sprigg, a spokesperson for the city, said a project of this scale could take 18 months or longer.

Janet Laird, the city's environment director, has previously said the strategic plan was to begin last summer and finish by 2007.

She could not be reached for comment last week.

"I certainly don't want it to drag on any longer than it has to, but at the same point in time, it needs to be done right and sometimes when you do it right it does take a little bit of time," Wyman said.

The community development and environmental services committee received a report recently indicating staff have hired Gartner Lee Limited as consultants for the plan.

The report also requested city council approve the formation of a public steering committee, which will include members of council, one representative each from the university and the chamber of commerce, and several members of the public.

The city received approval for the solid waste master plan grant in April 2006. The official announcement will be made in a few weeks.

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Family of boy killed by puck appreciates fundraising efforts

Family skate to be held on Sunday to raise money for Sick Kids Hospital

By VIK KIRSCH
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Jackson Swindells, 10, still thinks of his best friend in the present tense, despite the fact Nicholas Lambden succumbed to a brain injury after he was hit by a puck on an outdoor rink early last month.

"We're really close," Jackson said yesterday. "At one point, we thought we were brothers."

Jackson has been thinking a lot about Nicholas, the 10-year-old left-winger on the atom AA team where he's a goalie.

"Sometimes I feel really sad. I feel like I have no one to play with," Jackson said yesterday as team members gathered with their parents for an outing to the University of Guelph's Gold rink, the site of an upcoming public fundraiser for the hospital where Nicholas spent his last hours in intensive care.

Jackson welcomed the effort to help Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children to honour his buddy at the public skating session, which runs from 1:30 to 3:20 p.m. this coming Sunday.

"I think it's good. He loved playing hockey," Jackson said.



Teammates of Nicholas Lambden on the Junior Storm hockey team joke around in the lobby of the Gryphons Arena yesterday.

Nick's father, Guelph builder Andrew Lambden, thanked the families yesterday for their hospital fundraising efforts.

Through donations and in memoriam gifts, the amount of money garnered has been rising.

"I think our latest count was over \$10,000," Lambden said yesterday.

"I think it's a beautiful thing to see the community rallying," for the advanced-care hospital in memory of his son, Lambden said.

"Our family's obviously overwhelmed at this time, but comforted by this sort of support," he said, intending

to join the people coming out Sunday.

"I'll be here with my skates on," Lambden said.

Jackson's mother, Tina Swindells, said it's healthy for Nick's teammates to feel they're accomplishing something with Sunday's event.

"They're going to be out there in their uniforms skating," Swindells said. "I think it makes them feel good they can do something in Nick's name."

Sick Kids, she said, deserves the public's support, particularly the trauma centre that tried to save Nick's life.

"I'm glad we have that hospital,"

Jackson said, "it's an amazing hospital."

Yesterday, Mikael Ruffini, 10, was still struggling to put into words how he felt about Nick's death, having played hockey and soccer with the boy.

"We were really close," Mikael said, adding he misses Nick "a lot."

He said he understood the importance of the Toronto hospital.

"They get to do research so they can save other kids," Mikael said.

His father, Steve Ruffini, said team members shared an active social life, including sports, sleepovers and play days, so they really bonded.

"If you take one out of the equation, kids are really affected," he said. "He misses him a lot."

"It's ongoing (pain). It's really hard. It's going to be time that really heals," Ruffini said, adding he and his wife, Maria Ruffini, don't avoid the subject.

"We talk to him about it. We're really proactive," Ruffini said.

Coach Jeff Clarke said the boys on the team have received counselling.

"The kids are doing well now. They're progressing well... since Nick's death," Clarke said.

Nick wasn't wearing a helmet at the time of the accident, in which he was struck by an errant puck while retrieving another one from a snow bank. Teammates are insisting, Clarke said, that everyone coming out to Sunday's family skate wear a helmet.

That's why, Clarke said, organizers have decided anyone under 16 must wear one during the event.

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