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Nation's First LEED Gold School Installs Solar Panels

Attend ribbon cutting ceremony 1:30 p.m., April 22, at Bethke Elementary

LOUISVILLE, Colo., April 14 /PRNewswire/ -- As the first school in the nation to receive Three Green Globes, a LEED Gold for Schools certification, and in 2009 scored a 99 out of 100 earning it the prestigious Energy Star Label, Bethke Elementary continues to be a leader in sustainable education. Thanks to a new solar electric system from Colorado-based Bella Energy, Bethke Elementary now covers 11% of its electric needs with solar.

The partners involved in this exciting project invite you to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony at 1:30 p.m., April 22, at Bethke Elementary School, 5100 School House Drive, Timnath, CO. The ceremony is scheduled in conjunction with Earth Day and will raise student and staff awareness of energy related usage and savings.

"The new solar collection system at Bethke Elementary is a groundbreaking event for Poudre School District (PSD)," says Jerry Wilson, PSD Superintendent of Schools. "We are excited about the possibilities this system offers, from energy savings for the district to providing a learning tool for our students."

Bethke was the first beneficiary of the *Renewables on Schools Program*, launched in 2008 by local environmental nonprofit Trees, Water & People (TWP). Each year since then, the organization has used its annual *Renew the Rockies* event to raise money for renewable energy projects on local schools.

"We are thrilled with what PSD has done with the initial funds we raised for Bethke," says Lacey Gaechter, Community Outreach Coordinator for TWP. "We donated towards a 10kW system, and they found a way to turn it into a 20kW array. It is wonderful to see the project come to fruition, making us even more excited to contribute to this year's recipient, Kinard Middle School."

The entire system was funded by energy efficiency and solar reward rebates from Xcel Energy and the donation from TWP. The system includes a Web camera, solar weather station and is interfaced with PSD's building automation system to provide real time, Web-based data from the system which will be a learning tool for students, staff and community members.

At Bethke, the system's 90 solar panels produce enough electricity to prevent more than 50,000 pounds of carbon dioxide from being released each year, ensuring that the students of Bethke Elementary are learning in one of the greenest buildings in the country.

"The staff is looking forward to integrating the importance of this technology into the energy strand of our science curriculum. The photovoltaic system will be a highlight of the student-led tours of the building by our environmental committee," said Ann Alfonso, Principal.

Kinard Middle School is under consideration for becoming the next solar implementation site.

To learn more about this project or the project at Kinard Middle School, contact Stu Reeve, PSD Energy Manager at 970-490-3502.

About Bella Energy – The people of Bella Energy have been working to provide Colorado communities with renewable energy since 1982. Specializing in mid to large scale solar electric systems, Bella Energy is one of Colorado's largest solar energy companies. Our mission is to provide the solar energy systems that will empower our future, help businesses grow, families succeed and communities thrive. Learn more at <http://www.bellaenergy.com>.

About Xcel Energy – Xcel Energy is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company that provides a comprehensive portfolio of energy-related products and services to 3.4 million electricity customers and 1.9 million natural gas customers through its regulated operating companies in eight Western and Midwestern states. Company headquarters are located in Minneapolis. More information is available at xcelenergy.com.

About Poudre School District – Located in Northern Colorado, PSD is the ninth largest school district in the state with 50 schools serving more than 24,000 students educating every child, every day. PSD exists to support and inspire every child, to think, to learn, to care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world. Learn more at <http://www.psdschools.org>.

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