



4-H is Answering The President's Challenge!

Carrie Ann Olson, Extension Educator, Center for Youth Development

The President's Challenge is for one million Americans to complete the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA). 4-H is taking on the President's challenge in a big way. 4-H has launched their efforts to have 100,000 4-Hers complete the challenge by September, 2011, <http://www.national4-headquarters.gov/> and encourages everyone to get involved. This challenge is part of our commitment to support the White House's *Let's Move!* Initiative.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled. Today, almost one in every three children in our nation is obese or overweight. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others may face



chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and asthma. Everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity, including elected

officials, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, and private sector companies. Your involvement is key to ensuring a healthy future for our children. The *Let's Move!* initiative has instituted various programs across the country to mobilize each of these sectors to become involved in solving the problem of childhood obesity nationwide. As part of the *Let's Move!* program the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award program was started.

Healthy living has been at the core of 4-H and remains one foundation of the pledge (I pledge...my health to better living...). 4-H strives to equip youth with healthy living knowledge and skills that will prepare them physically, emotionally and socially to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The Presidential Active Lifestyle Award recognizes those individuals who log their recommended physical activity for six weeks during an eight week period, five days a week (60 minutes for youth, 30 minutes minimum for adults). 4-H is making this goal a top priority.



Physical activity is a bodily movement that uses energy to contract muscles. Physical activity can be structured, like playing on a basketball team, or unstructured, like playing tag outside or riding bikes. Physical activity can also be part of everyday activities such as taking the dog for a walk or sweeping the floor. There are many health benefits associated with regular physical activity:

- Physically active youth have higher levels of cardiovascular fitness compared with youth who are inactive.
- Physical activity helps to build and maintain stronger bones and muscles.
- Regular physical activity also reduces the symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Research shows that physical activity among adolescents can positively affect their concentration, memory and classroom behavior.
- Establishing regular physical activity early in life makes it more likely that youth will remain healthy as adults.



You can join the effort as an individual or a group and compete for 4-H incentives in several ways. For more information talk to your local 4-H staff or contact Carrie Olson @ olson166@umn.edu



Continuing Opportunities for Learning About Biomass Energy

Joel Tallaksen, Biomass Gasification Project Coordinator

With the large USDA funded biomass gasification research project completed and staff transitioning to other biomass related projects, I thought it important to summarize some of the biomass education and outreach resources that are available for people who would like further information about biomass and biomass gasification. As a partner in this project, the West Central Research and Outreach Center is committed to providing the best available information to people interested in biomass energy. The project gathered an impressive amount of information, data, and experience in using agricultural and other biomass for energy. Much of that information will be maintained and in many cases, the research continued in new directions with new funding sources.

The major vehicle for continuing biomass and gasification education and outreach is the worldwide web. The website features an online tour/explanation of the Morris Gasification Facility's operations with photo slide-shows and illustrations, a feature to more easily illustrate the process of biomass gasification to the layperson. A 'real-time' gasification facility "control panel" for public display is being finalized. This "biomass control panel" allows users worldwide to visually see information about the current and recent run-time statistics of the facility. The website also allows us to provide the worldwide community access to project activities via documents and publications. A key document to be added shortly is the Biomass Gasification Toolkit developed as a summary of our findings. This is meant to be a guide for people interested in developing biomass energy projects. It is planned that additional biomass related work will be added as information from new projects becomes available.

Project team members have also worked to develop course content for college level and professional continuing education courses. Some of this content will be used in on-

going University of Minnesota, Morris courses, guest lectures on the Morris and Twin Cities campuses, or is being considered for on-line dissemination. The biomass gasification capstone and short courses were unique in that they introduced the multi-disciplinary nature of gasification chemistry, economics, agricultural and environmental issues to audiences. It is hoped that funding can be found to offer these courses again. In the mean time, much of the information used for the courses and course modules will be available online.

Another outreach activity for the biomass gasification project has been meetings and tours with project staff. Although the best way to learn about something is often to see it and hear about it in person from people involved in researching and operating a renewable energy system, biomass project staff have visited numerous communities throughout the region and spoke with thousands of people. While we won't likely be able to visit as many communities directly since project funding has ended, we still welcome people to contact us for on-site talks and tours.

If you would like more information biomass gasification or other types of renewable energy, please look at the online resources at <http://www.renewables.morris.umn.edu>, contact me at 320-589-1711, or e-mail me at tall0007@umn.edu

AgCountry Auditorium

May 16 & 17—Organic Dairy Meeting
May 16—Stevens County 4-H
May 23—Leaders Council

Seminar Room

May 12—WCROC Faculty Mtg.
May 16—Renewable Energy
May 16—Extension Meeting
May 17—4-H Regional Staff Meeting
May 18—Facilities Meeting
May 19—Hort Marketing Meeting
May 23—Renewable Energy