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Sarasota County sets goal of energy independence with designation as first national Renewable Community

Sarasota County is taking the first step to reduce its dependence on fossil fuel with the announcement today of its designation as the first Renewable Community demonstration project in the nation. The demonstration project is an opportunity for Sarasota County to be an energy leader and to leverage partnerships to achieve energy independence.

The designation for Sarasota County was announced during a news conference today with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

"While there are hundreds of renewable energy projects, this is the first program that puts together renewable energy to power homes and advanced vehicle technologies to power cars," said Sarasota County Commissioner Shannon Staub. "This program puts us on a path to energy independence."

A Renewable Community integrates a renewable energy based energy system for both transportation and residential/commercial buildings. Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) and Zero Energy Homes (ZEH) are the key components of this integrated system. In a zero or near-zero energy home, rooftop photovoltaic (PV) power-generating systems supply most of the energy the house needs. This PV system can also provide power for the flexible-fuel hybrid electric vehicle in addition to the neighborhood electrical grid. These new housing and transportation technologies using renewable energy will protect the environment and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

"As a nation, we must use a range of options to reduce our dependence on foreign oil," said Terry Penney, the Technology Manager for FreedomCAR and Advanced Vehicle Technologies at NREL. "One of these options is the vision of a renewable community, one that uses renewable energy to power both homes and cars. Sarasota County is leading the nation with this partnership that puts together renewable energy generation technologies and advanced vehicle technologies in a renewable community that makes sense today and for the future."

Located in Golden, Colo., NREL is the U.S. Department of Energy's primary laboratory for renewable energy and energy-efficiency research and development.

Other partners with Sarasota County and NREL include Steven Winter Associates, Florida Power and Light, Florida Department of Environmental Protection/Florida Energy Office, Florida Solar Energy Center, Global Electric Motorcars, Florida Home Builders Association, Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County, Florida Green Building Coalition, HomeFront Inc., Hymotion, Energy CS, Kimal Lumber Company, Eco-\$mart Inc., Lee Wetherington Homes, Plug-In Partners, School Board of Sarasota County, Sarasota Home Builders Association, Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence, SDC Communities, LWR Communities, Vision Homes, Waterford Companies and WCI Communities Inc.

Sarasota County government is dedicated to fostering community sustainability in its policies and procedures. The concept emphasizes the interdependence of the county's social, environmental and economic well-being as the foundation of an improved quality of life for future generations. Promoting the use of various forms of renewable energy is a key element of sustainability.

The news conference was held in conjunction with the Sustainable Communities Workshop, a two-day workshop featuring national and local experts leading sessions about smart cars, smart houses and other strategies for developing communities of the future that are secure, safe and dedicated to addressing energy and environmental needs.

For more information, visit www.sustainablecommunities.scgov.net.

Media Note: For media who were unable to attend the press conference, a media kit is available online at www.scgov.net.

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