

KUNI Radio Series “Unplugged”  
Show #41: I-Renew Expo 2

From the Center for Energy & Environmental Education at the University of Northern Iowa, this is Pat Higby with a series of programs on Iowa Public Radio KUNI to help you save energy.

Are you someone who likes to use the latest kitchen gadgets or the newest technologies for your phone, computer, or photography? If so you are what the fashion industry calls an innovator. If you prefer to let someone else break the trail, but soon follow, you are probably an early adopter. In both cases you are willing to give something new a try, once you know about its advantages. If you are thinking of building a new home, you probably want something other than traditional wood frame construction. Today you have a unique opportunity to learn about some very different building technologies at the I-Renew Expo in Solon, Iowa.

If you can get to Solon High School in less than two hours you can hear Brad Young talk about natural building with straw bales. If you miss Brad’s talk at 10:30, don’t despair, Ronald Gunderson will discuss whole tree and straw bale construction at 2:30 this afternoon. Several straw bale houses have been built in Iowa, and their thick walls offer good insulation from summer heat and winter wind. Brad and Ronald have real world experience with these buildings, and will answer your questions regarding this unique building technique.

If you prefer a solar home, you can learn what Chuck and Mary Ann Peters have done at their 11:30 presentation called “Solstead: Place of the Sun” At the same time there are presentations on solar greenhouses and dumb luck buildings, so you may want to take along a friend or spouse, and share what you learned at different sessions on the way home.

If you are less adventurous, you can still have an energy efficient home made with wood. Earl Mason will tell you how to build it at 10:30, or listen to Kurt Kleinschmit discuss how to buy an energy efficient home later this afternoon at 3:30.

In addition to the presentations on homes, there will be session on wind power, photovoltaic systems, making your own bio-diesel, and tax incentives to pay for these projects from the 2005 Energy Policy Act. You can even bring along the kids, and help them build a model solar car, make a hot water solar bag, or create posters and other art projects.

All of these wonderful activities can be yours for just \$5, or for your entire family for \$10. Solon is between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City, and can be reached from either Highway 30 or Interstate 80 on Highway 1. Once in Solon, follow the signs to the I-Renew Expo. I’ll be there, too, so if you see me, please say hello!

I’m Pat Higby, Energy Educator at the Center for Energy and Environmental Education at the University of Northern Iowa.