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Shedding candlelight on conservation Event draws diners' attention to energy use, competition

Feb 26, 2009

By Casey S. Elliott

For some South Green residents, grabbing a bite to eat Wednesday evening had the feel of date night.

Nelson Dining Hall diners ate their evening meal by candlelight at the first-of-its kind Residence Challenge Conservation Dinner. The goal was to raise students' awareness heading into the final days of the challenge, an annual contest in which residence halls compete to see which can conserve the most electricity.

More than 1,100 students attended, a typical number for a Nelson weeknight dinner. But what wasn't typical were the recycled candles and decorations made from newspapers and magazines.

"(The dinner) will be a little bit different for our customers, but it's fun to do and it's informative," said Kent Scott, Nelson Dining Hall's senior general manager. "I think it will make people think about their energy usage."

Ohio University's Eco-Reps, a group of residents and resident assistants committed to making on-campus living environmentally friendly, sponsored the dinner with assistance from the Office of Sustainability.

Here's what some event organizers and attendees had to say about the dinner and energy conservation efforts in general:

- "This (dinner) makes a good statement to us about being more aware of our environment."
-- *Laurie Harman, a resident of Adams Hall*
- "I'm glad the university is making (saving energy) a competition. If we did (a candlelit dinner) once a week, we'd save a lot of energy."
-- *Liz Dumler, also of Adams Hall*
- "I like the Residence Challenge because it makes saving energy fun, and it should be. It gets people thinking and makes people aware of how much energy they use."
-- *Hoover Hall Eco-Rep Jill Carlson*
- "The overall condition of the Earth depends on these grassroots movements, for people to be active in their community and aware of their impact."
-- *Martzolff House Eco-Rep Eddie Barnes*

Since this year's Residence Challenge began Jan. 19, on-campus residents have worked to reduce their carbon footprint by swapping out incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent ones, gathering to watch movies in the dark and learning how to reduce their personal energy usage.

Students from the top energy-conserving halls from each green will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Cedar Point. The total number of winning students is proportionate to the amount of energy savings realized during the



Recycled candles and decorations added to the atmosphere at the first Residence Challenge Conservation Dinner.



Freshman Nick Hurst (right) and friends enjoyed dining by candlelight.

Photographer: John Stoops

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competition.

The competition gets stiffer every year, with the previous year's gains set as the starting point for the current year's challenge. This year's contest ends March 9.

Related Links

Residence

Challenge: <http://www.ohio.edu/sustainability/ResChallenge2009.htm>

Office of Sustainability: <http://www.ohio.edu/sustainability/>

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