

## Penn State's solar home opens for public tours

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — Welcome to the home of the future. It's called the MorningStar, and it gets all of its power from the sun. This 800-square-foot solar house was designed and constructed by Penn State students and faculty as Penn State's entry in the 2007 Solar Decathlon, an international competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. Now the MorningStar, which placed fourth at last fall's competition in Washington, D.C., is back on Penn State's University Park campus and ready to serve one of its core purposes, public education.

The MorningStar is now located in front of the Centre County Visitor's Center, where it will serve Penn State in two ways: as a laboratory to develop a better understanding of the best technologies and systems for the Pennsylvania climate; and as a center for green outreach, where students can receive training to give public tours and raise awareness about energy-efficient building and living.

This weekend the MorningStar officially opens its doors to the public, with guided tours available from noon to 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 17, and 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 18. The home will then be open for drop-in tours from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday.

"The MorningStar house was conceived because of the need to show people in a tangible way the possibilities for home energy now and in the future," explained David Riley, director of Penn State's Center for Sustainability. "Since we knew we were going to show it off, the house is packed with demonstration concepts and technologies."

Some of the features, Riley said, "belong in every home in America today." It includes technologies that "may not be seen commonly for another five to 10 years," he predicted.

Design of the home was based on a concept developed through the University's American Indian Housing Initiative (AIHI), which has produced a dozen sustainable buildings on tribal reservations over the last decade. A lower cost version of the MorningStar home was built on the campus of Chief Dull Knife College in Lambe Deer, Mont., and a team is currently designing the MorningStar-3, which will be a demonstration home on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota.

"We're very excited that through industry partnerships developed during the Solar Decathlon, some of the ideas and technologies in the home are now being adopted and adapted by a modular home builder in Pennsylvania," noted Riley.

Ultimately the MorningStar will move to the Center for Sustainability's 9-acre site on Porter Road, where it will continue to serve as a research and outreach center. The timing of that could be as early as next summer.

To learn more about Penn State's Solar Decathlon entries, past and present, visit: <http://solar.psu.edu/>. For information on the Center for Sustainability, go to <http://www.cfs.psu.edu/>.

Contact Cole Hons [cmh103@psu.edu](mailto:cmh103@psu.edu) <http://live.psu.edu/outreach> 814-865-7600