

Glenwood Springs teacher gets environmental education award

Honor comes from National Renewable Energy Laboratory

BY JOHN GARDNER

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO COLORADO,

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colorado — Yampah Mountain High School science teacher Susy Ellison practiced her posing in front of the school's photovoltaic solar panels Tuesday.

Ellison received the Renewable Energy and Efficiency Education Excellence in Teaching Award from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Golden.

The award is given to one teacher per year in recognition for his or her effort in implementing environmental education into everyday learning.

It's an honor that Ellison is proud to receive.

"Oh yeah," she said. "It is cool. It's good for the school, and it validates what we are doing."

The recognition comes from Ellison's education initiatives, which highlight bringing renewable energy into the curriculum, helping with the construction of the sustainable straw bale classroom at YMHS, and implementing a photovoltaic solar system that not only serves as an educational tool but offsets the school's carbon emissions as well.

According to Darlene Brenner with the NREL, it's teachers like Ellison that are helping to shape the future of renewable energies.

"We hope that more and more students will get an eye for the future of the renewable energy industry," Brenner said. "They are going to be the work force."

And it's a subject that Ellison strongly believes in.

"Environmental Ed is teaching about something that matters and is relevant," Ellison said. "It's the one thing that connects you to the planet. If you're not connected, you don't care. And if you don't care, then there you go."

Ellison has been at YMHS for 12 years as a science teacher and advisor. She has always integrated environmental education into her curriculum because it's the way she lives her life as well.

Ellison said her home was the first solar tied system for Holy Cross.

She is hopeful that the subject will continue to grow in all aspects of education.

"It's becoming stronger," she said.

It's an integrated subject that involves all the subjects of English, math, science and social studies.

"It's huge social studies," Ellison said. "It's civics. Making right choices, that is what civics is all about."

Ellison will receive the award during the Colorado Science Teacher's Convention Dinner, on Thursday at the Denver Merchandise Mart. With the award she will receive \$500 cash.

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