

Wednesday September 14, 2005


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## Energy efficient dorms on the rise

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September 13, 2005

Energy costs in Hawaii are among the highest in the nation. The University of Hawaii Center for Smart Building and Community Design is working with the UH Student Housing Office and a non-profit organization called Strategic Energy Innovations to address energy consumption and attitudes toward energy use.

The Energy Star Dorm Demonstration Project will showcase a residential apartment at UHM that has been given energy-efficient products approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. By monitoring and comparing the energy consumption of the energy-efficient apartment with an apartment containing standard appliances, the organizations conducting the project hope to show that energy efficient products are cost-effective.

Kody Kato, a third year architecture student, volunteered to live in the Energy Star dorm. Kato believes in the values of the Center for Smart Building and Community Design, which is an extension agent of the UH Sea Grant Program. The center views this demonstration project as a chance to raise awareness of the university staff and students on choices that can save energy and reduce costs.

"[The mission of Sea Grant] is to focus on issues, challenges and opportunities that face coastal communities," said Director of the UH Sea Grant Program Gordon E. Grau. "It's about using resources wisely to utilize our habitat ecosystem in a way that does not create a large environmental footprint."

The center's Energy Star Dorm Demonstration Project will provide the university administration with tangible energy savings and serve as a model for retrofitting existing dorms and designing new ones.

Kato said this should be a big issue for students. Using Energy Star products saves students money without reducing the quality of their lives.

According to Grau, other ways the center can address the energy issue in Hawaii include using existing technology to reduce UH's \$13 million-plus yearly utility bill.

The center is a focus of the Coastal Communities and Economies extension theme of the UH Sea Grant Program. There are six other

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extension themes that outline the areas of concern for the UH Sea Grant Program and its sponsors, which include Education, Aquaculture, Biotechnology, Coastal and Nearshore Resources, Coastal Natural Processes and Hazards, and Tourism.

The Center for Smart Building and Community Design supports Sea Grant's mission by creating and supporting economically viable, attractive communities that enhance their environment, economy and culture.

"We're looking at improving the interaction among the built, natural and human environment in the coastal areas," Stephen Meder said, the director of the Center for Smart Building and Community Design.

Grau said, for example, that the need for the use of automobiles could be reduced, either through mass transit or the design of our neighborhoods, so that people have the option of biking or walking.

"We could simultaneously save energy that goes out of our economy to buy oil and reduce the pressure on our ecosystems," he said.



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