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YES! Teams Make Sustainable Connections at Winter Workshop held at Gustavus Adolphus College

St. Peter, MN, March 4, 2016—35 students and 4 teachers from Youth Energy Summit (YES!) teams at Minnesota New Country School, Mankato West High School, Sleepy Eye High School, and St. Mary's High School participated in the recent Completing the Circle Winter Workshop at Gustavus Adolphus College on March 2, 2016. This workshop instructed students on the concepts behind sustainability, allowing students to connect with experts and gain information to position them for success as they excel in team-based projects this school year.

The day started with a behind-the-scenes look at the sustainability practices in place at Gustavus Adolphus College. Jim Dontje, Chair and Director of Johnson Center for Environmental Innovation, showed students solar thermal and electric installations on Olin Hall and the Jackson Campus Center. The tour continued with a look at the mechanics behind the solar thermal system on the Lund Center, which supplies partial pool heating and domestic hot water. From there, students witnessed sustainability in Gustavus' cafeteria starting with the food pulper and ending with the vessel composter inside the college's greenhouse. Students enjoyed seeing the renewable energy installations and compost system in action and asked several poignant questions of Dontje.

In the afternoon session, Jenna Totz, Curriculum Coordinator with Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy, helped students make the connection between what they throw away and climate change. She stated, "one activity that we did had the students look at the Life Cycle of Goods for a particular product. Each group thought about the extraction, manufacture, distribution, use, and end of life management for one product (notebooks, pencils, apples, etc.). Then, they went around to see the work of other groups and offered suggestions on how to use less energy or produce less waste at each step. The students were really thinking about the impacts their choices have. It was fun to see their excitement about making changes to the system."

Students and adults alike enjoyed connecting to sustainability at Gustavus and are looking forward to implementing ideas they learned in projects in their communities.

ABOUT YOUTH ENERGY SUMMIT

YES! empowers youth to partner with their community to create economic and environmental vitality through hands-on learning and team-based projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction, recycling, composting, local foods, and more. The YES! Program is a collaboration between Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, Laurentian Environmental Center, Saint John's Outdoor University, and Ney Nature Center. Major funding for the 2015-2016 season is provided by the McKnight Foundation and the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, a constitutionally-established permanent fund for protecting and enhancing Minnesota's environment and natural resources, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). For more information, visit www.youthenergysummit.org

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