Training in renewable energy field is key locally

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Imperial Valley can be the future of renewable energy, and education officials want to make sure locals get to take part in the industry.

Local work-force training leaders reported on what their groups are doing to improve renewable energy education in the area at Thursday’s session of the Imperial Valley Renewable Energy Summit. A common theme through many of the speeches was partnerships between training groups and the renewable energy industry.

Area community college officials know partnerships well, working with both San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus and renewable energy businesses to expand their training, said Imperial Valley College interim President Victor Jaime. Especially now working with others is important to be able to do more with less.

The school is starting up an associate degree in renewable energy, he said. The school has also held a groundbreaking in December for its new technology building.

Other speakers at the morning event included Imperial County Workforce Development Office Director Frank Marquez, CalEnergy Operations and Maintenance Training Manager Michael Moore, GC Energy President Elizabeth Perez, Imperial Valley Electrical Training Center Assistant Training Director Bert Richardson and San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus Dean David Pearson.

San Diego State University-Imperial Valley is also working toward increasing its renewable energy education through partnerships with IVC and renewable companies, Pearson said. The school has partnered with SolOrchard to start up a five megawatt solar field in Brawley, along with other projects in the area.

The college is looking to start up a renewable energy center, including demonstration projects, a conference center and research station, he said. However, there’s still a lot of work left to do to get everything going.

What’s clear, though, is the stars have aligned and now seems to be the time for renewable energy, he
said. The college needs help to make that renewable energy future here a reality.

The importance of energy was brought home last year during the Sept. 8 power outage when cell phones were down and people lined up just to get gas, said Bert Richardson. Electricity is the life blood of our society, and companies are working to increase the electrical infrastructure here. The training group is working to make sure locals can do the work needed.

“We seek to create a sustainable human infrastructure,” he said. “… We are in it for the long run.”

The group has set up an electrical training center to train those who will build the local projects, he said. That will help get locals trained to work in the new renewable energy field and keep money flowing through the economy.

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