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Direct Energy Promotes Energy Efficiency Education, Helps Propel Charter Schools Go “Green”

Partnership with Alliance to Save Energy Estimated to Reduce Energy Costs by 5-15 percent at Propel Charter School's Eight Locations across the greater Pittsburgh area

Pittsburgh, August 18, 2011 – [Direct Energy](#), the largest competitive retailer of energy and energy related services in North America, is helping to fund the “Green Schools” program through a partnership with the [Alliance to Save Energy](#) at Propel Charter Schools’ eight locations across the greater Pittsburgh area. The initiative kicks off Thursday, August 18, at Propel Braddock Hills High School with an educational conference that will teach school district teachers and employees, and in turn teach students, how to save electricity through small, individual actions.

“The Green Schools program not only teaches young people about the importance of effective, efficient use of energy, but also demonstrates firsthand the significance that small, individual actions can have on their school, in their home and in the community,” said Cory Byzewski, Vice President and GM of US North for Direct Energy.

Energy costs are one of the most significant expenses schools must budget for, and can far exceed what is spent on textbooks and other supplies and activities critical to learning. The objective of the Green Schools program is simple but powerful – educate and empower students, teachers, administrators and custodial staff to make a difference in their school’s energy usage. During the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, the program will teach them about energy and how to conduct their daily activities in more efficient ways.

“We believe in a comprehensive approach to education at Propel, so we’re happy to offer our students such an integrated, engaging program on an issue that affects all of us,” said Marsha Burleson, Principal of Propel Braddock Hills Elementary. “Plus, like every school, we’re dealing with increased budget challenges, so the projected cost savings of 5 to 15 percent is very important to us.”

The first phase of the program is a training session for teachers and administrators. The school then becomes a learning lab, where students learn about energy efficiency, assess usage in their school and apply science, math and language arts to solve problems and make improvements. Students also learn that the smallest actions can have a large impact in both dollars saved and pollution reduction, such as implementing energy-efficient vending machines and turning off lights in rooms that are not in use. Simple changes like these can save thousands of dollars in avoided electricity costs.

Specifically, the Green Schools program for Propel Charter Schools has four overarching goals:

1. **Save energy and lower school energy costs** by having students implement no-cost behavior and operational changes;
2. **Strengthen student learning** by integrating energy topics into K-12 curricula and creating student advocates for energy efficiency who understand the links among energy, the environment and the economy;
3. **Educate the whole school community** about the value and cost of energy, and involve that broad community in savings projects to create sustainable institutional awareness and participation that will endure beyond the Green Schools program; and
4. **Engage students as advocates for energy efficiency** improvements in their homes and communities.

The Propel Charter Schools Green Schools program will be supported by local project leader, Laura Hepp Bradshaw, for the eight communities where the schools are located (Propel Montour, Propel Homestead, Propel McKeesport, Propel East, Propel Northside, Propel Braddock Hills, Propel Braddock Hills HS, Propel Andrew Street). These individuals will help the schools implement the goals of the Green Schools program and support the students as they learn and develop their own energy-saving projects.

“The concept of energy efficiency is so abstract,” says Megan Campion, Program Manager for the Alliance to Save Energy. “The Green Schools program makes it understandable to students with concrete examples of basic changes they can make to their routines, which consequently helps schools save valuable energy dollars.”

Alliance to Save Energy President Kateri Callahan adds, “We are pleased to expand this program to Western Pennsylvania and have an impact on the Propel Charter Schools and the surrounding communities through the generosity and commitment of Direct Energy.”

About Direct Energy

Direct Energy is one of North America's largest energy and energy-related services providers with more than 6 million residential and commercial customer relationships. Direct Energy provides customers with choice and support in managing their energy costs through a portfolio of innovative products and services. A subsidiary of Centrica plc (LSE:CNA), one of the world's leading integrated energy companies, Direct Energy operates in 45 U.S. states plus the District of Columbia and 10 provinces in Canada. Direct Energy has operated in Pennsylvania since 2008 and supplies natural gas and electricity to thousands of customers in the state. Direct Energy's commitment to helping others extends beyond Pennsylvania. The company partners with community-based organizations throughout North America to aid them in trying to make a positive impact in their communities.

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About the Alliance to Save Energy

The Alliance to Save Energy is a coalition of prominent business, government, environmental and consumer leaders who promote the efficient and clean use of energy worldwide to benefit consumers, the environment, the economy and national security.

About Propel Schools

Propel serves 2,500 children in seven school locations: Homestead, Turtle Creek, Montour, McKeesport, Munhall, Braddock Hills and the Northside. These schools serve a diverse student population that brings with it the full range of challenges that urban public schools face. Students are taught by a talented education team with significant leadership skills and a strong pool of trustees anchors a durable governance framework. The schools have the highest levels of student achievement among high poverty schools across the state of Pennsylvania. Propel has become both a regional asset and a national model, providing measurable evidence of how innovative public schools can expand opportunity for children and families and can revitalize communities.

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