

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

November 23, 2005

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Public Invited to Free Screening of New Documentary on Solar Power Produced by Nobel Laureate Walter Kohn & Narrated by John Cleese

The public is invited to attend a free screening of a new documentary about solar power produced by Walter Kohn, one of UC Santa Barbara's Nobel Laureates and a research professor of physics.

"The Power of the Sun" will be shown Tuesday, Nov. 29, at 4 p.m. in Campbell Hall on the UCSB campus. A question-and-answer session led by Kohn will follow.

Narrated by actor John Cleese, the 56-minute film is described as "a scientific morality tale." It tells the story of how the ideas and the technology to tap the sun's rays as a source of clean, safe, and renewable energy were first developed.

Kohn served as executive producer of the project, and recruited another UCSB Nobel Prize winner, Alan Heeger, to join him on the project's scientific advisory board. Other members are Zhi-Xun Shen, a physics professor at Stanford University, and James Allen, chair of the physics department at UCSB. Kohn won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and Heeger, a UCSB professor of physics and of materials, won the 2000 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Kohn turned to experienced scriptwriters John Perlin and David Kennard to bring together in an understandable and entertaining way the use of Einstein's theory of light as packets of energy, called photons, and the development of the photovoltaic cell as a practical, increasingly efficient converter of light into electrical energy.

Kohn is encouraged by the decreasing cost of manufacturing silicon-based photovoltaic cells, the basis of solar panels. "Solar energy is quite realistically estimated, in two or three decades, to contribute perhaps in the vicinity of 25 percent of total electricity consumption," he has said.

The project has been funded by grants from the California Energy Commission, the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, and the Office of Naval Research.

The DVD of "The Power of the Sun" also contains another film, called "The Power of the Sun --- The Science of the Silicon Solar Cell." This 20-minute animated film shows how a solar cell works. It is aimed at science teachers who are working with 12th graders or college freshmen in the areas of chemistry and/or physics, materials science, and engineering. Single copies are free to teachers while supplies last. For more information on the project and to order the DVD, go to .

Related Links

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