

Eco students tour continues

By Joe Hendricks
Herald Staff

SANFORD — The Ecological Student Citizens of Seminole County will continue its tour of local public presentations with an invited appearance at the Thursday night's monthly Seminole County Democratic Executive Committee meeting.

The May 24 meeting will be held at the Seminole County North Branch Library, at 150 N. Palmetto Avenue, in downtown Sanford. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

The Eco Students will give a short presentation on what they feel Seminole County cities need to do to participate in becoming more environmentally friendly. The presentation will focus on the economic impact "going green" can have for city governments.

"Environmentally friendly practices are good for the planet, but the real benefit for local government lies in the tremendous amount of tax dollars that can be saved," said Eddie Hollenbeck, Chair of the Ecological Student Citizens of Seminole County.

"Even just one LEED certified school, on a national average, can save over \$100,000 a year and carries only a short one-year payback on the initial investment of being more ecologically friendly. This is just one exam-

ple of how cities are saving hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars all over the country," Hollenbeck said, during an address given to members of the Council of Local Governments (CALNO).

"Some are doing this simply because of small infrastructure changes in what brand of office products they purchase and others because they are adhering to new LEED building standards that have been created by the U.S. Green Building Council," Hollenbeck added.

Eco Students began in February as a service-learning project in a class called Ecological Citizenship. The group initially consisted of 14 Seminole Community College honor students. The program is not affiliated with the school, but some of the students are earning independent study credits while pursuing what they believe to be a worthy cause. The group's efforts will come to an end in mid-June, in conjunction with the end of the current summer semester at Seminole Community College.

About the group's cause, Hollenbeck said, "It's not a red or blue issue, it's truly a green issue involving economics and the environment."

The Eco Students' primary focus is on educating Seminole County's elected officials about the U.S.

Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and encouraging local mayors to sign the agreement that already signed by more than 500 mayors nationwide. The Eco Students hope to appear before County Commissioners in order to address the matter at a county level.

The U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement was spearheaded by Seattle Mayor, Greg Nickels and calls for mayors to join together and develop action plans on ways to eliminate the amount of greenhouse gases their cities are producing. Solutions include public transportation improvements, equipment purchases, and even gas-alternatives for city fleets.

According to Eddie Hollenbeck, the agreement was drafted after the U.S. government chose not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, an amendment to the international treaty on climate change that deals with mandatory emission limitations for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information about the Eco Students, contact Eddie Hollenbeck at 800-390-2029 or by e-mail at: eddie@ecostudents.org.