

Energy Education

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The oil and gas industry's staffing shortage and ongoing concern for its public image are placing renewed emphasis on energy education. Several new initiatives are designed to help both students and teachers increase their awareness of energy and give them adequate information to assess careers in energy.

During last month's SPE Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition (ATCE), a special event brought together teachers from throughout the Anaheim, California, area to participate in a workshop designed to help teachers inform students in grades kindergarten through 12 about energy. The 1-day event, which started with a tour of the exhibitions at the conference, was designed to give teachers a better understanding of the science of energy, the various sources of energy, and the global need for oil and gas, including information on how oil and gas is found and produced, brought to market, and distributed, as well as the various economic factors at play. The educators also discussed different ways of bringing the subject of energy into the classroom.

SPE conducted the workshop with the NEED Project, based in Virginia, which has been involved in promoting energy education for almost 30 years. The conference event, the first of its kind at ATCE, followed a similar successful event at this year's Offshore Technology Conference in Houston that drew high interest. The workshops dovetail with SPE's increased efforts to improve energy education for students and the general public through its www.energy4me.org Web initiative.

SPE's energy4me program offers a comprehensive, factual, and balanced information resource on all things related to energy. It provides information that an SPE member could use when giving a talk before students or in another public venue, including ready-made presentations for elementary and secondary-school students. The initiative is headed up by DeAnn Craig, chairperson of the SPE Energy Information Committee and a former SPE president. She is a senior vice president, Asset Assessment, with CNX Gas.

The oil and gas industry is becoming better accomplished at energy education and in attracting and recruiting students at the university level. But, as Baker Hughes Chief Executive Officer Chad Deaton points out in this month's *Talent & Technology*, which is packaged with this month's *JPT*, the industry needs to do a better job "exposing secondary-school students to potential careers in oil and gas technology before they begin their college education." The industry needs to become more involved in encouraging secondary-school students to study math and science and helping them understand how important energy is to the world. "If we show them the technology that we are developing and applying to produce oil and natural gas in more than 90 countries around the world, I think many of them will get excited about careers in this industry," he says.

A key player in promoting secondary-school education is the Junior Engineering and Technology Society, commonly known as JETS. Now in its 60th year, it is undergoing what it calls an "extreme makeover, high school outreach edition." JETS prides itself on being one of the foremost programs for motivating high school students to consider careers in energy. Now it is sharpening its focus and reshaping its message to reach students who may have ignored its message in the past.

JETS is revamping and enlivening its website (www.jets.org) by adding video clips, "extreme engineer" interviews, and improved content for more than 20 engineering disciplines. The organization is also promoting the idea that engineering is not just for the top math and science students but for those with other skills compatible with engineering, such as the ability to visualize, think analytically, and understand processes and organize concepts. JETS is also putting more emphasis on the humanitarian side of engineering.

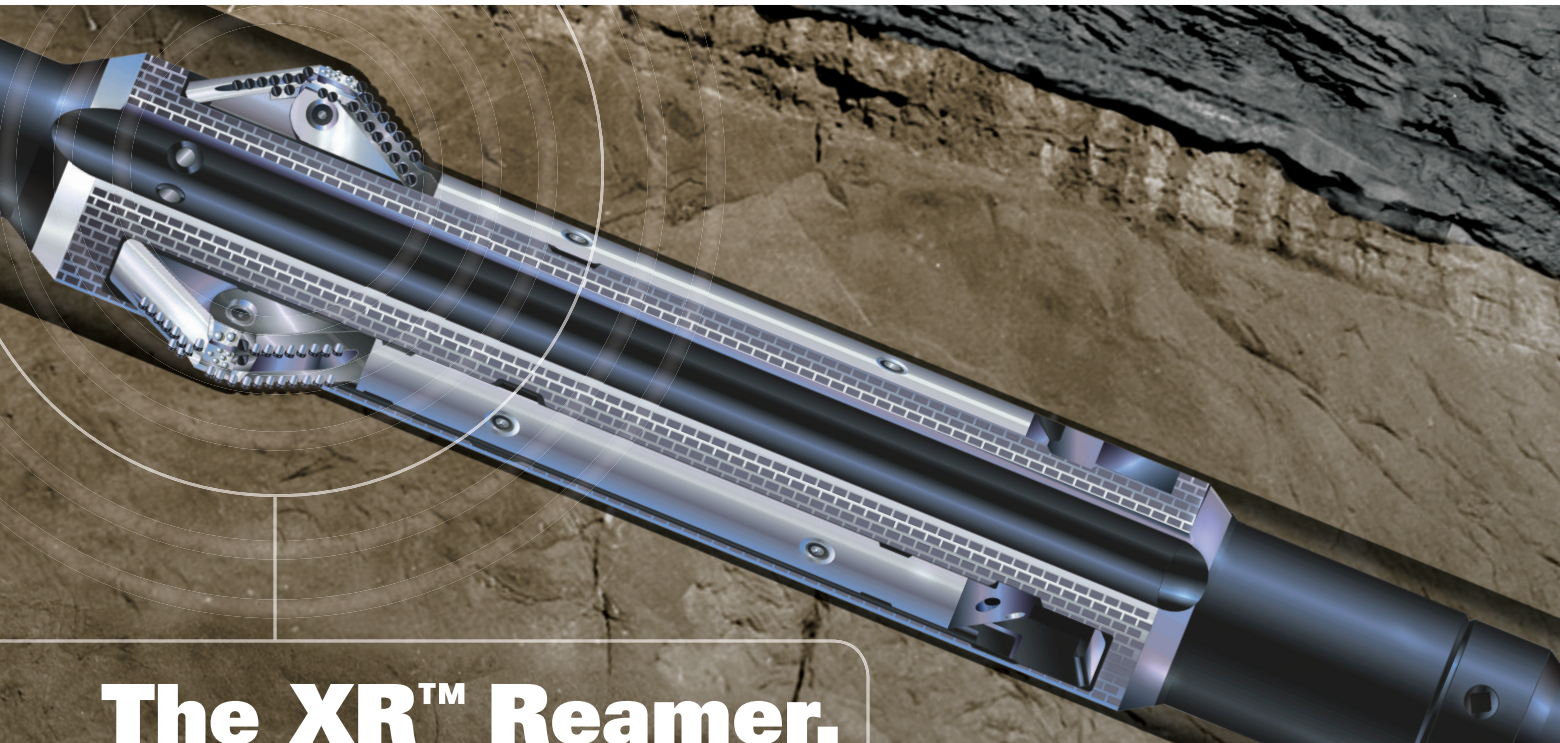
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