Speaker: Nuclear energy a danger to health

A board member of Physicians for Social Responsibility argues there are "no safe levels" of radiation exposure and urged those attending his Monroe lecture to advocate for wind and solar power.

BY CAITLIN VANOVERBERGHE

In his travels around Michigan over the past week, Alfred Meyer has come across several Pure Michigan billboards. He said he would take a picture of one of those billboards and place it next to an image of the Fermi 2 nuclear power plant.

"Then I'd put a caption under it which read 'Pick one,' " he said.

His comment earned a round of applause from the dozen or so community members gathered in the program room of E-liis Library & Reference Center, where Mr. Meyer presented a lecture titled "Nuclear Power, Price, Pollution and Proliferation."

Mr. Meyer is a board member of the Nobel Prize-winning organization Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). He has been traveling around Michigan talking with concerned citizens about the physical and environmental dangers associated with nuclear energy.

"We need energy to heat our homes and power our devices, but we also need our health and our environment," he said.

Mr. Meyer explained that PSR is a group of medical professionals and average citizens working together as activists to bring awareness to safety issues medicine may not be able to combat. Through his work with PSR, Mr. Meyer commonly speaks with groups and other organizations about nuclear disasters, such as those in Chernobyl, Ukraine, and Fukushima, Japan.

His speaking tour — which originally was to be hosted by Dr. Jeffery Patterson, a former PSR president who recently died — has taken him to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and South Haven. The final stop will be tonight in Ann Arbor.

During his presentation, Mr. Meyer shared information about how nuclear power plants, such as Fermi 2 in Newport, affect the lives of those living there and the environment in their immediate vicinity.

He argued that there were "no safe levels" of exposure to radiation for humans, plants or animals and that the effects of those energy waves are rarely tested.

"Illnesses don't come with labels," he said. "There isn't a sign that tells (doctors) a person has thyroid cancer because of Fermi — they just have thyroid cancer. But it isn't just cancer. (Radiation) affects your circulatory system and other parts of the body."

According to the DTE Energy Web site about Fermi, "people living near Fermi 2 receive less than one millirem of exposure a year due to that plant's operation."

A millirem is a unit used to measure doses of radiation. Additionally, Mr. Meyer called for changes to renewable energy and said that wind and solar power provide much safer means of creating energy. He appealed to the crowd to write to state officials requesting a change.

"We are the people we've been waiting for to make a change," Mr. Meyer said.