



MONROE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MCCC, DTE ENERGY DEDICATE FERMI 1 HISTORICAL EXHIBIT IN CAREER TECHNOLOGY CENTER



MONROE, Mich. – Monroe County Community College and DTE Energy today dedicated an extensive exhibit built into the student concourse of the college's new Career Technology Center that details the history and importance of the Enrico Fermi Atomic Power Plant

(Fermi 1).

At the time it began operation in the mid 1960s, Fermi 1 was the world's largest liquid-metal cooled, fast breeder reactor.

The unveiling of the "Enrico Fermi (Fermi 1) Atomic Power Plant Historical Exhibit" took place at an afternoon ceremony just hours after the formal opening of the Career Technology Center, a \$17 million, 60,000-square foot facility that houses state-of-the-art classrooms and lab space for high-demand technical programs.

The Fermi 1 exhibit stems from DTE Energy's license application for a new unit (Fermi 3) on the current Fermi site. The potential construction of Fermi 3 would impact Fermi 1, which the Nuclear

Regulatory Commission concluded would qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, DTE Energy agreed to create a public exhibit on the history of Fermi 1.

DTE Energy approached former MCCC President Dr. David Nixon in November 2011 about partnering with the college to develop the exhibit and house it at the college. MCCC officials agreed to do so, and, in turn, formed a steering committee made up of MCCC faculty and administrators, DTE employees and retirees, and other interested parties who participated in comprehensive sessions to provide ideas for the content of the display.

A sub group of that committee was charged with implementing those ideas in just over a year so that the exhibit could be included in the Career Technology Center when it opened.

Included in this exhibit are three wall displays: a discussion of the history and significance of Fermi 1 to Monroe, the nuclear power industry and the world; a timeline of important dates in Fermi 1's history; and a timeline of the history of nuclear power.

To supplement text and photos, the exhibit also includes historical artifacts and a video entitled "Through Their Eyes: Reflections on Fermi 1." Some of the artifacts were donated by DTE Energy and others are on loan from The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. The artifacts are protected in display cases meeting very precise specifications outlined by The Henry Ford, as well encased within the wall displays.

"The engineers and operators of Fermi 1 were pioneers designing, building and testing new equipment and establishing new protocols and procedures specific to this one-of-a-kind facility," said Ron May, DTE Energy senior vice president, major enterprise projects.

"Scientists and dignitaries from all over the globe came to Monroe to learn from this cutting-edge nuclear plant and its world-class staff. This part of DTE Energy's history and its rich contribution

to nuclear power development in the world should be a source of great pride for the company and for Southeast Michigan.”

The Fermi 1 historical display project was managed and edited by Randy Westmoreland, technical expert for major enterprise projects at DTE Energy, and Joe Verkennes, director of marketing at MCCC. Jamie Steis, former DTE Energy intern and a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, and John VanHouten, a DTE Energy intern and a student at Wayne State University, assisted in the coordination of the project.

Edmund LaClair, assistant professor of history at MCCC, wrote the display’s content with the help of Lynne Goodman, DTE Energy licensing manager, major enterprise projects, and Earl Page, a nuclear engineer who worked for the firm that designed Fermi 1 and later retired from Detroit Edison. Dan Shaw, assistant professor of journalism at MCCC, wrote and produced the video portion of the display.

David Smith, a temporary full-time MCCC faculty member in the Applied Science and Engineering Division and a former engineer at Fermi 1, was a key member of the committee who lent additional background and research to the project. He is working with fellow faculty members Tom Harrill (electronics) and Martin Dubois (mechanical engineering technology) on a Fermi 1 control room panel mockup incorporating original instruments, which will be tied to a computer display mimicking control room operations. This mockup will be added to the exhibit at a later date.

The exhibit was designed, constructed and installed by 2020 Exhibits, which is headquartered in Houston but has a regional office in Northwood, Ohio near Toledo, where the display was fabricated.

DTE Energy made donations to MCCC to pay for the entire cost of the display.

In conjunction with the exhibit, a sculpture of a suspended, spinning atom that stood for many years at the Fermi Visitor Center has been relocated to the MCCC campus.

The restored “Atomic Sculpture” now greets visitors to MCCC with the following message in white block letters on a bright red background: “MCCC: Home of the Fermi 1 Historical Exhibit.”

The sculpture was restored and installed at MCCC through donations from DTE Energy and the Michigan Section of the American Nuclear Society.

Below is a summary of the artifacts included in the display:

- Models of a nuclear fuel rod cutaway, radial blanket assembly and a control rod
- Model of a nuclear fuel rod grid structure
- Parts from the reactor and fuel assemblies.
- Portal personnel contamination monitor unit
- Beta-gamma hand and foot monitor, circa 1960
- An early conceptual model of Fermi 1
- A model of the zirconium plate that caused the partial fuel melt incident in 1966
- Plaques
- Original photographs
- Initial Fermi 1 start-up charts
- Original documents, including a request for a court injunction by the UAW to halt the project and the Supreme Court ruling that the permit for construction was legally issued
- Guest registers that contain the signatures of dignitaries from all over the world who visited the plant

“A lot of the credit for this exhibit coming to fruition goes to former MCCC President Dr. David E. Nixon, who, over his 10 years at the college, built a tremendous relationship with DTE Energy,” said MCCC President Dr. Kojo A. Quartey.

“Dr. Nixon realized that an exhibit such as this made perfect sense in the new Career Technology Center, which is home to the college’s applied science and engineering programs, including our nuclear engineering technology program that was started in conjunction with DTE Energy – a strong program partnership that continues today. He knew that members of the faculty and staff would work seamlessly with DTE Energy employees, retirees and others to develop a highly impressive exhibit that will preserve the history of Fermi 1 for many generations to come.”

“DTE considered a number of different institutions to partner with to create the exhibit, but none were more enthusiastic or qualified than the staff at MCCC,” May said.

“The college proved to be an ideal choice to showcase this highly visible project, considering the following: its prominent role in Monroe County as an institution of higher learning; the other notable partnerships with DTE, such as the 500-kilowatt solar array and the nuclear technology program; and, most of all, the faculty and staff’s passion for the project along with the expertise they have provided in the areas of history, journalism, graphic arts, historical preservation and nuclear power.”

“Monroe County is rich in history,” said State Rep. Dale Zorn (R-Ida). “The Fermi 1 Historical Exhibit will welcome students of all ages with an historical overview of the nuclear industry and the Monroe connection.”

“The Fermi 1 reactor was built by some of the most skilled and innovative minds of its time; it is now a unique part of Monroe County’s heritage,” said Bill LaVoy (D-Monroe). “It is fitting that the one-of-a kind exhibit is contained within this world-class facility, where a new generation of highly skilled workers will be trained.”

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