The Solar Decathlon Begins!

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Today, the Department of Energy kicked off the Solar Decathlon 2011, an exciting event that challenges students from around the world to design and build energy-efficient and solar-powered homes. The event also educates the general public about the benefits of clean-energy homes and products.

The keynote speakers for the kick-off included Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey and Liang Zhipeng, the deputy director general for the Department of Renewable and New Energy in China, among others. All of the speakers applauded the participating students' hard work and encouraged them to keep thinking outside the box to create better solutions for energy efficiency. The houses were also open for tours, and each one had a unique feel but all integrated solar and energy-efficient features to make them truly sustainable.

L: Opening speakers at the kick-off event. R: Applachian State University's team at the ribbon cutting ceremony

The event opens to the general public starting tomorrow, Sept. 23 and lasts until Oct. 2. The winning home will be announced on Oct. 1. The event takes place on the National Mall's West Potomac Park in Washington, DC, and is free of charge. Attend this event to see the incredible work these students have accomplished, and gather ideas to use in your own home!

Office inside Purdue University's house.

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