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Journal file photo

People interested in solar energy speak with representatives from Solar by CIR at last year's Solarize Southtowns launch party hosted by Green Springville.

Green Springville receives Environmental Excellence Award

Max Borsuk
Editor

After the success of its Solarize Southtowns campaign, Green Springville was recently awarded a 2020 Environmental Excellence Award from the Erie County Environmental Management Council.

The Environmental Excellence Award program began in 2015 to “recognize exceptional projects carried out by municipal and non-profit organizations in Erie County that stand to have a significant and lasting

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positive impact on the natural environment. The awards program is designed to help showcase and publicly promote projects that can be replicated in community throughout the Western New York region.”

Green Springville, a nonprofit organization that promotes sustainable living in Springville and the surrounding communities,” started its Solarize Southtowns campaign in 2019, which brought potential solar customers together from the towns of Concord, Colden, Evans, Eden and Sardinia in order to work with a vetted solar installer to provide a cheaper price on solar installation. The campaign also worked to educate people, dispel myths and promote the benefits of solar energy. “It was a surprise and an honor,” Green Springville President Reed Braman said.

“It’s nice to be recognized for the hard work ... and if it could help us move people in that direction whether its solar panels or gardening or just coming to one of our events, I’m happy to have received that.”

Throughout the Solarize Southtowns campaign, 40 events were held within the five participating towns, over 120 residents were engaged within the many events and 34 homeowners decided to install solar panels on their property, which was enough of a solar array to reduce greenhouse gases by 271 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, according to the EMC.

Along with Solarize Southtowns, Green Springville was also the first to include a Solar-for-All program. Solar-for-All is a program from the **New York State Energy Research and Development Agency** for low income residents that helps older residents on a fixed income access solar electricity to help reduce their energy bills.

From reducing energy bills to helping the planet by using more renewable energy, solar energy offers a variety of benefits and Braman is happy with the reception for the Solarize Southtowns campaign from the local communities.

“I figured [the Solarize Southtowns campaign] was a success in terms of stimulating the local economy, getting people to switch over to green energy and to help out the planet a little bit,” Braman said. “It’s a great way to reduce your bills, use green energy and reduce your carbon impact. If you can afford it and your situation is right ... it’s a great deal and now is the time to do it.”

Other recipients of the Environmental Excellence Award included Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, Master Gardener Volunteer Program; Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, Watercraft Inspection Stewardship Program; Erie Community College and Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Water Academy.

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For more information on Green Springville, visit the Green Springville, Inc. Facebook page or email GreenSpringvilleInfo@gmail.com.



Local governments, labor, community and industry organizations urge Congress for one-time increase in EM funding to create jobs and infrastructure projects

Recently, a broad coalition of labor, community and industry organizations prepared a letter urging Congress to provide a much-needed economic boost to some of the regions hardest hit by the current pandemic through a one-time \$7.25 billion increase in funding for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management program.

The funding, which could be spent in the near future, will help reignite the national economy, assist in reviving small businesses, and create thousands of new jobs. At the same time, it could reduce one of the federal government's largest liabilities, accelerate the national defense mission and build a nuclear workforce for the future.

The letter was signed by 17 organizations including the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, North America's Building Trades Unions, the Energy Communities Alliance and Energy, Technology and Environmental Business Association. "We have worked to improve coordination among federal, state and local government leaders, contractors, unions, communities and economic development entities, resulting in real progress," the letter states. "However, we must remain committed to reducing one of the country's largest environmental and financial liabilities to drive the innovations and technological advancements for America's future."

According to the letter, DOE can successfully manage increased funding and leverage it for future economic development as it has in the past.

"The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allowed DOE to speed up decontamination and demolition at numerous sites and award more contracts to private industry and small businesses to hasten the clean-up of legacy nuclear waste. During ARRA, EM proved a worthy investment: the program received \$6 billion and was able to

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reduce the program's future financial liabilities by \$13 billion through the acceleration of cleanup work. EM contractors alone hired over 20,000 new workers, putting them to back to work to reduce the overall cleanup complex footprint by 688 square miles while strengthening local economies."

The letter identified dozens of high-impact projects that EM could initiate and complete with the \$7.25 billion for **West Valley**, the Hanford Site, Idaho Cleanup Project, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, Los Alamos Legacy Cleanup, Nevada, Oak Ridge, Paducah, Portsmouth and Savannah River Site.

The 17 organizations and local governments signing the letter include Energy Communities Alliance; Energy, Technology and Environmental Business Association; Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO; United Steelworkers Local 12-9477; City of Idaho Falls, Idaho; City of Paducah, Kentucky; **Town of Ashford, New York**; Tri-City Development Council; Greater Paducah Economic Development; Hanford Communities; McCracken County, Kentucky; North America's Building Trades Unions; Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce; Paducah Area Community Reuse Organization; Regional Economic Development for Eastern Idaho; Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization and Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness.

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