

NEWS

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For Immediate Release
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5,000th home goes solar in Oregon with support from Energy Trust of Oregon

Hood River home was 1,000th to go solar in 2009 using cash incentives and services offered by the nonprofit

HOOD RIVER, Ore. — October 29, 2013 — In a place known for its cloudy weather, Oregon has reached an important milestone that truly makes the most of its sun. Solar panels went up today on the 5,000th home to install solar power with help from Energy Trust of Oregon, a nonprofit that provides cash incentives and services for going solar. By connecting 5,000 solar-powered homes to the grid, the nonprofit estimates it has helped avoid producing 7,100 tons of carbon dioxide — the equivalent of removing 1,250 cars from Oregon roads for a year.

“From Pendleton to Portland, Ashland to Astoria, thousands of Oregonians have proven that solar is a big success in our state,” said Dave McClelland, solar program manager, Energy Trust. “Energy Trust is proud to have helped so many take advantage of the sun’s abundant energy for their everyday needs, while also adding more renewable power to Oregon’s energy equation.”

Energy Trust began offering solar incentives for residential customers of Portland General Electric and Pacific Power in 2003 to help offset the upfront cost of going solar. When combined with currently available state and federal tax credits, the incentive helps homeowners save up to 80 percent off their installation.

The organization has also seen its roster of trade ally contractors that install solar systems expand from 36 in 2003 to a current count of 123 statewide. Trade allies receive training from Energy Trust and can coordinate the incentive paperwork for their customers.

Since Energy Trust began supporting solar projects, the solar scene has also evolved. Due to growing demand in the marketplace, costs have lowered by about 43 percent for the average 3-kilowatt system over the past five years. Plus, new opportunities such as neighborhood Solarize projects and solar leasing are making it easier for even more people to take the plunge.

Anbu Varatharajan and Durga Nallathambi live with their 4-month-old daughter in the 5,000th solar home located in Northwest Portland. Last fall, they moved into their newly-built home, which already boasts a number of energy-efficiency features — it’s both ENERGY STAR® rated and features an EPS™, Energy Trust’s energy performance score. While the couple has an interest in sustainable energy, they were not yet sure if solar fit into their plans.

“We thought adding solar would be very expensive, until our neighbor went through the process,” explained Varatharajan. “We were able to work with our contractor on a solar lease

plan, which meant no out-of-pocket cost for us right now, but we can still make a positive environmental impact, and of course an impact on our energy bills.”

Energy Trust solar trade ally contractor SolarCity installed the new 5.75-kilowatt system.

Another solar milestone home is located right in Hood River, where Kate and Rich McBride are the owners of the 1,000th solar home supported by Energy Trust. The McBrides have had nothing but great results from the solar system they installed on their hillside home in 2009 — producing much of the energy their home uses throughout the year for free from the sun. Yet, for them, it’s not all about the cost savings. Kate, a member of the Hood River City Council, and Rich, commission chair of the Port of Hood River, also care about the local environment and want to make a positive mark. Local trade ally contractor Common Energy installed the system.

“We’ve always been conscious of our energy use and wanted to do something that was more of a long-term solution that could live on with the home,” said Kate. “We feel good knowing we’ve done something good for the environment, while making our home better than it was when we purchased it.”

For more information about Energy Trust cash incentives for solar and connections to qualified solar trade ally contractors, visit www.energytrust.org or call 1-866-368-7878.

Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping utility customers benefit from saving energy and generating renewable power. Our services, cash incentives and energy solutions have helped participating customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas save more than \$1.3 billion on energy bills. Our work helps keep energy costs as low as possible, creates jobs and builds a sustainable energy future. Learn more at www.energytrust.org or call 1-866-368-7878.

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MEDIA NOTE: Informational graphics showing Oregon solar home milestones and trends from the last decade are available for media use, as well as images of the 5,000th solar homeowners and today’s installation at their home. Download high-resolution files here: <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjLwgzsd> or contact Lisa Scholin at 503-320-9379 or lisa@blueflypr.com.