



# **Solarize Madison County hopes to expand success of initial Godfrey program**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
March 13 2017 12:06 PM



**GLEN CARBON** - With threats such as climate change, peak oil and ever-increasing energy costs, solar panels are becoming enticing to home and business owners trying to get ahead of the curve.

To assist those home and business owners in their decisions to go solar, Solarize Madison County is presenting as many as 20 "power hours," or informational sessions detailing local, state and federal incentives to purchase solar panels. Nate Keener, who is facilitating the public information for the campaign, said several community volunteer

groups are helping home and business owners interested in converting to solar panels learn the benefits and cost offsets possible through the Solarize Madison County incentive.

The first of these power hours will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 14, 2017, at the Glen Carbon Police Department Community Room, located at 149 N. Main St. The sessions are free to the public, last about an hour and work towards informing potential solar buyers of the incentives of solar. Under the Solarize Madison County program, Keener said county groups are working with Straight-Up Solar to allow buyers to purchase panels at bulk prices, creating a savings of as much as 15-20 percent of normal market value, Keener said.

"We have about a dozen of these power hours set up now," Keener said. "More are coming in July and August. We are aiming for about 20. During these, we keep content to about an hour, and bring folks in from the public for free sessions. We tell them about the benefits of going solar, give them info on solar energy and have an installer on site to answer questions."



Besides the bulk pricing, home and business owners in Madison County will be able to learn about state and federal benefits. Federally, people are allowed a 30 percent investment tax credit, which takes an additional 30 percent from the cost of panels and installations. On a state level, solar investors are able to receive one Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC), which the owners of the systems are able to sell on an open market. Keener said one SREC is created every time a megawatt of power is generated by the system.

He said upwards of five or six megawatts are created by a standard five kilowatt system, which is the normal system utilized for the everyday operations of a normal household.

"Installers purchase SRECs on the open market for the best price they can get," Keener said. "During Solarize Godfrey, people were receiving about \$200 for an SREC. We are having an auction for these later this month or early next month, and we are estimating around \$145 per SREC, but that is only an estimate. We don't know what that price will be until after the auction."

Keener said the price change may be as a result of the price of solar panels decreasing.

During [that Solarize Godfrey campaign](#), Keener said 15 home and business owners throughout Godfrey invested in solar energy, which created right around 150 kilowatts, he said. The Solarize Madison County initiative is nearly identical to Solarize Godfrey, only on a much wider scale. Keener said he is involved with Solarize Madison County due to the [success of Godfrey's solar initiative in 2016](#). He said talks for Solarize Madison County began in fall 2016 after the Solarize Godfrey initiative expired.

Finances are only part of the incentives for going solar, Keener said. In fact, solar paneling may take as long as two decades to pay for materials and installation through energy savings, but that is based on today's rates. Ultimately, solar power frees home and business owners from the energy grid.

"It pays off long-term," Keener said. "Over the course of 25 years, folks will save money on energy bills enough to offset the costs of materials and installation. But, it's also clean energy. After that system is paid off, folks are getting clean and free energy. They can be off the grid and invest in clean energy for energy independence."

Also working as the Lewis and Clark Sustainability Director, Keener said he is aware the process of creating solar panels requires emissions. He said all energy processes have some sort of emissions-related issue.



"Every process has some sort of emissions-related process, but emissions related to creating panels are fewer than other energy sources," he said. "Typically with a solar system, the system will pay back the energy used to produce solar panels in two years."

These power hours will be held throughout Madison County in the coming months at the following locations on the following dates:

- Tuesday, March 14, 2017, 6 p.m.: Police Department Community Room, located at 149 N Main St., Glen Carbon
- Thursday, March 30, 2017, 6 p.m.: Louis Latzer Memorial Public Library, located at 1001 Ninth St., Highland
- Tuesday, April 11, 2017, 6 p.m.: Old Bakery Beer Company, located at 400 Landmarks Blvd., Alton
- Monday, April 17, 2017, 6 p.m.: New Song Fellowship Church, located at 201 St. Louis St., Edwardsville.
- Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 6 p.m.: New Douglas Community Center, located at 123 S. Main St., New Douglas
- Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 6 p.m.: Six Mile Regional Library Training and Events Room, located at 2001 Delmar Ave., Granite City
- Thursday, April 27, 2017, 6 p.m.: Louis Latzer Memorial Public Library in Highland.
- Tuesday, May 2, 2017, 6 p.m.: Tri-Township Public Library, located at 209 S. Main St., Troy
- Tuesday, May 9, 2017, 6 p.m.: Hamel Community Building Senior Center, located at 10 Park Ave., Hamel
- Tuesday, May 16, 2017, 6 p.m.: Louis Latzer Memorial Public Library in Highland
- Monday, May 22, 2017, 6 p.m.: Fort Russel Township Hall, located at 5456 Buchta Rd., Bethalto.
- Thursday, May 25, 2017, 6 p.m.: Old Bakery Beer Company in Alton