



Grow Solar Delivers Energy Programs to Gateway Region

June 18 2020 11:31 AM

GODFREY – More time spent at home has made the high cost of electricity a noticeable problem for many in the Gateway Region.

Julie Downs, of Waterloo, and Robert McMullen, of University City, have turned to solar installations to combat the rising costs of powering all the devices that run almost constantly in their homes.

Grow Solar St. Louis and Grow Solar Metro East are community-based programs offering free education about solar and are matched with a bulk purchase discount program. The goal is to bring residents and small business owners from the greater Gateway Region together to lower the price of solar while increasing the deployment of clean energy.

According to Glenda Abney, interim vice president of education and director of sustainability of the EarthWays Center at the Missouri Botanical Garden, discounts for solar energy installations will increase as more people participate.

“The more people who join the program, the lower the price will be for everyone,” Abney said. “In addition to the cost-saving benefits of using a renewable resource, solar can help homeowners and small businesses reduce their impact on the environment and improve their quality of life.”

McMullen became involved in the program after learning it had municipal backing. “I liked the idea of a community being involved and that together we are lowering our carbon footprint and reducing global warming,” he said. “Each homeowner’s impact might be small, but combined with others, it might make a big difference.” Downs agrees.

“I don’t have any children, but there are children in my life that need to inherit a health world,” she said. “Solar is one of those options that can contribute to that objective. It makes me feel I am doing my part.”

Grow Solar Metro East began in 2016 in Godfrey with the help of local organizations and a partnership between Lewis and Clark Community College and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), resulting in more than 175 local solar installations. In 2019, the EarthWays Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden partnered with Washington University and MREA to pilot programs in the City of St. Louis and a handful of nearby municipalities that resulted in 70 solar installations.

In 2020, Grow Solar St. Louis has expanded its geographical area to include all of St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. Likewise, Grow Solar Metro East has expanded to include Calhoun County in addition to Madison County, St. Clair County and Monroe County.

Grow Solar installers are chosen through a competitive process conducted by an advisory committee. St. Louis-based StraightUp Solar was chosen based on their high-quality solar installations, proper solar credentials, customer service, familiarity with the region and experience working with solar group-buy programs.

Renew Missouri also offers a separate, similar innovative non-residential group-buy program entitled “Renew STL Solar.” This program allows non-residential entities (businesses, municipalities, hospitals, schools and universities) in the Gateway Region to install solar at a competitive rate.

For more information, contact Lewis and Clark Community College Sustainability Director Nate Keener at (618) 468-2782 or nkeener@lc.edu.