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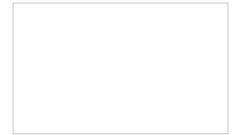

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Weather Lottery

CURRENT WEATHER
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Sunny

Temp. 74° F

Humidity 34%

Feels like 75

Wind WSW at 14 mph

Time 2:35 PM



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Couple sees solar panels as way to do more for environment

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August 23, 2009 11:55 PM

Laura Oleniacz

New Bern residents Ralph and Beverlee Redding were the second to have a solar energy-generating system installed at their home locally to sell their homemade energy back to the grid.

The system went up last week at their home at 5019 Clubhouse Drive, installed by the Fayetteville company Alternative Energy Concepts.

"We believe we have to do more for our environment than we're doing," Beverlee Redding said. "We're just one tiny speck, but still we're going to do the best we can with our speck."

The couple was excited to see the work get started, as it took more than three months and six or seven meetings to get approval for the system from their homeowner's association.

"We've had hurdles to overcome," Beverlee said, in making sure their neighbors were comfortable with the 5.8-kilowatt system, made up of 27 photovoltaic panels, installed on the South-facing side of their roof. Dr. Ralph Redding, a retired specialist in pulmonary and sleep medicine, said they needed an 11-0 vote from the association, so they had an Alternative Energy Concepts representative attend a meeting to answer neighbors' questions.

Beverlee said that one question was, "why do you want to do this if there's only one other in town?"

But once the work started, "we've had neighbors come around and look," Beverlee said, adding that one neighbor came by each day.

"I was so excited about starting this," Ralph said, adding that he's wanted a system for a long time.

Part of their motivation came from their son, Sandy Wiggins, who is chairman of the Board of Directors for the e3Bank, a financial institution starting up to support sustainability that would commit 10 percent of its corporate profits to support the "green economy," according to the Web site www.e3bank.com.

Wiggins was also the past chair of the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Green Building Council, a nonprofit that works for sustainable building design and construction.

"He's kind of inspired all of us," Ralph said. "Whenever we get together, I hear about it. He sounds a little like a preacher at times."

The Reddings heard about Alternative Energy Concepts from the first local resident to install solar power. The company started several years ago as a branch of the electrical company Intelect Inc., said Jim Wood, the green group's energy auditor and spokesman. Recently, they've seen an increase in installations.

"We're doing one of these about every week now," Wood said. "Because of the tax incentives that are available now, that's really why solar is financially making sense to more people."

Wood said there is a 30 percent federal tax credit available, and a 35 percent state tax credit that is capped at \$10,500. The cost of the Reddings' system was about \$43,000, and Ralph said he sees the remainder of the cost as an investment.

"What I'm doing is investing upstairs on the roof for a return of about 8 to 10 percent on my (certificate of deposit)," he said, explaining that he pays 14 cents per kilowatt-hour of electricity, but he will be paid 19 cents per kilowatt-hour once the system is connected to the power grid.

Redding said he will be paid a premium for the energy he produces with the solar system by his electrical utility company and by N.C. Green Power, a program organized to encourage the use of renewable energy in the state, according to the Web site www.ncgreenpower.org.

But this is not the first time the couple have used renewable energy in their home.

The couple heated their pool with solar power when they lived in Tulsa, Okla. This spring, they installed more insulation in their attic to save energy, and convinced the owners of the 14 town homes in their neighborhood,

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[Liz Bowles/Sun Journal](#)

Tim Mills, left, and Corey Shalanski, right, both of Alternative Energy Concepts, install 27 solar panels on the roof of Dr. Ralph and Bev Redding's home in Greenbriar.

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except one, to do the same.

"Everybody tells us all down the block how less expensive their electrical heating is," Ralph said.

The two were pleased with the solar installation company. Beverlee even said she had begun to see them as family.

"We've enjoyed them all immensely," she said. "I think that's unusual. You can get a job done, but we feel like a family. I'm going to miss them."

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missgertie wrote:

Good job, Reddings. Great energy minded and conservation choice. Thanks for the article, S-J!

8/25/2009 4:59 AM EDT

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2wheels wrote:

Maybe I can get a free set up from the gov't! Solar Panels for electric meters program...

8/24/2009 9:25 PM EDT

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paigerph wrote:

Yep, 43 grand is a lot, but you can have solar hot water for around 8 grand (that's before the tax breaks). I think that's a more affordable option for most folks right now; at least until the price of these systems comes down (and they will). You can also get a geothermal system for heat/air for around 20 thousand, before tax incentives.

8/24/2009 8:16 PM EDT

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lifemovesfast wrote:

I agree - who wouldn't like to go off the grid? But who the heck can afford it?

8/24/2009 4:23 PM EDT

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usa4freedom wrote:

at \$43000, if you saved 200 a month it would take almost 18 years to get even, if you have no up keep. But its a fee country, every one can do what they want.. for now..

8/24/2009 8:40 AM EDT

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upthecreek wrote:

43 grand? That's real nice but you have to be a DOCTOR to afford it! 43 grand.....GET REAL! I know I can't afford anything that approaches that kind of cost. I can't afford to go GREEN!

8/24/2009 7:44 AM EDT

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