SPOTLIGHT on Sustainablility

Solar Co-Ops in Orange County – Join the Movement!

"Florida's outlook is bright for solar and Orange County's co-op can help lead the way."
-Mayor Teresa Jacobs

What is a solar co-op?
A solar co-op is a group of people — neighbors, friends, problem-solvers — who join together to get a 'buying in bulk' discount on the installation of a solar energy solution for their home. Overall, it makes solar more affordable for everyone in the group, decreases their annual energy expenses and reduces their carbon footprint. Plus, the knowledge each member gains about solar technology and contractors will benefit their family, friends and community.

What's been happening here in Orlando?
The movement in Florida started here with two solar co-ops: West Orange and Orlando-Winter Park. These co-ops successfully brought together 249 members with 89 completed solar installations. In light of this success, Orange County is partnering with Florida Solar United Neighborhoods (FLSUN), part of Community Power Network (CPN), a national non-profit organization, and the League of Women Voters of Florida to sponsor a new solar co-op, facilitate information workshops and assist with requesting and evaluating bids. This new co-op is targeting Orange County employees and residents for membership.

How can you join a solar co-op?
You can start by visiting the group's website at the address below and attending an information session. Next, your roof will be reviewed for compatibility and you can assist with requesting and evaluating bids. Once a contractor is selected, you will get an individual quote for installation. If the costs, installation and investment return are right for you, you can choose to move forward with the installation.

What are the benefits?
For the homeowner, the obvious benefit will be reduced monthly electric bills. However, buying in bulk, along with federal incentives reduces the costs of the equipment and installation, making the return on the investment shorter, around 1/3 the life of the equipment. There may also be discounts unique to each local utility provider. Putting all these great incentives together makes this investment feasible for many homeowners.

How will this make a difference?
Florida is third in the nation for rooftop solar potential but only 14th for actual installed capacity. Expected population growth over the next 20 years as well as increased numbers of visitors creates a high demand for energy, putting our water and air quality at risk. By growing the installation of solar capacity, we can create more jobs in the solar arena, increase the awareness of renewable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Get Involved!
To learn more about solar co-ops in Orange County, go to http://www.flsun.org/orange-county/

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Orange County, Florida

For more information on Orange County's Sustainability Initiative, visit ***www.ochomeforlife.net***