

Solar Energy Forum Draws Large and Interested Crowd

By Paul Colella
Special to the North
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On a cold Saturday afternoon on Jan. 9, a solar energy forum was sponsored by the North Haven Clean Energy Task Force at the North Haven Library Community Room. Nearly 85 people attended the program that included presentations from environmental consultant Bill Colonis from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, business leader Bill Pakulis from the Wellpoint Corporation, solar designer and installer Dave Usdan, several North Haven residents who use solar energy and vendors who provided information and brochures on solar energy.

"The task force hosted this forum because we believe solar energy is the wave of the future," stated Hugh Davis, chairman of the task force. "We also want to inform residents where solar energy fits into the big picture of clean energy."

Colonis gave an overview on solar power and shared his views on the advantages of solar power. He explained that solar energy can be used to heat water, pools, homes and power attic fans. Also, it



Citizen photo by Maurice Libson

The 2010 solar energy forum included, from left to right, Kenny Foscue, vice-chairman of the North Haven clean energy task force, Bill Colonis, featured speaker from the Connecticut clean energy fund, and Hugh Davis, chairman of the North Haven clean energy task force.

may be sold back to the United Illuminating grid for credit to reduce the homeowner's electric bill.

"I believe that people need to become educated about so-

lar energy, and they need to know what type panels are best for them and where to place them," stated Colonis.

"Three important things to remember when installing

panels are place them in a non-shaded area facing south, place the tilt of the panels 45 degrees latitude, and focus on efficiency measures."

Colonis added that he supports the implementation and development of incentive programs for small renewable energy systems, including the Small Solar PV Rebate Program, Solar Thermal Incentive Program, and Ground-Source Heat Pump Incentive Program.

Another speaker, Pakulis, a supporter of the incentive programs Colonis spoke about, told the audience that businesses and corporations need to focus on management and sustainability of saving energy while reduc-

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ing their carbon footprint.

“At our Anthem and Blue Cross/Blue Shield facilities we use fluorescent lights, emphasize carpooling and video conferences, and we have installed new energy efficient windows and new duct work,” reported Pakulis. “Our facilities are open 24/7, and we are trying to find ways to be cost efficient while conserving energy and the environment.”

Usdan, a designer and installer of solar panels from Milford, talked about the solar installation experience he had when installing panels on the roof of the North Haven Health and Racquet Club building.

“An ideal site for a panel is pointing south,” Usdan explained. “People must keep in mind that the quality of site and rebates are important, and listen to what the vendors and installers suggest for homeowners purchasing solar panels. I encourage those interested to have a free site survey done on their home.”

Residents Ann Higgins, Frieda Halkovetz and Ray Sola described their personal experiences of how and why they chose solar power, what their choices were, and



Citizen photo by Maurice Libson

A packed audience in the Memorial Library community room enjoys the 2010 solar energy forum.

the difference it has made to them. All three encouraged members of the audience to take advantage of the incentive programs and reminded everyone that it is a costly project that takes 10 years before one will see a major payback, but it is well worth it.

After the presentations, there was a question and answer session for the audience. Representatives from several vendors, including Lantern Energy, United Electric, Go Solar Energy Store, and Sunlight Solar Energy were at tables distribut-

ing brochures describing various applications for solar energy, and answering questions. Also, Kenny Foscue, vice-chairman of the task force, encouraged people to sign up for the clean energy option for their regular electric service. Foscue stated that the task force has signed up 300 residents, which has made the town eli-

gible for three solar panels that will be installed at the high school.

“I am thrilled to see this wonderful turnout today,” stated First Selectman Mike Freda. “Through collaborative efforts of the task force and residents, we want to reach our goal by 2010. This is the future for us in North Haven and in the United

States.”

“We need to put conservation first while educating ourselves on what form of solar energy is appropriate for each homeowner and practicing energy efficiency. It is vital for our future,” said Steve Fontana, selectman and State Representative.