

# HELIOGRAPHS

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*Newsletter of the Illinois Solar Energy Association* ∞ **October 2008, Vol. 28, No.3**

## Solar Tour largest, most publicized in ISEA history

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, the Illinois Solar Energy Association hosted the largest tour in its history. More than 110 sites throughout the State participated. Sponsorships also nearly doubled over last year to nearly \$20,000, thanks largely to Coordinator Lisa Albrecht.

Jim and Kath Camasto hosted more than 130 visitors at their Naperville home alone. Beautiful weather, publicity from ASES and multiple newspapers made the stop a popular one. "It was a constant whirlwind; I never left the basement," said Jim. Thanks to the Camastos and all ISEA members who generously opened your homes to this year's ISEA Solar Tour.

First-time host, Jim Winfield of Darien, "was really blown away by the participation and enthusiasm. Everyone said they had seen publicity in newspapers, heard it on the radio, seen info at the local hardware store."

The increased publicity was no accident. Christine Esposito, a public relations professional, assisted ISEA in promoting the Tour. Christine was instrumental in getting media coverage in the Chicago Tribune, Sun-Times and numerous suburban newspapers.

## State solar & small wind rebate, grant funding cut

Illinois Senate Bill 790 recently redirected \$5.0m in funds for the State's solar rebate and grant programs to plug a budget deficit. Proponents argued that Program funds were

unspent while others contended that a grant freeze prohibited DCEO from disbursing any grants despite the initial allocation from the General Assembly.

Regardless, no State funding for renewable energy in looms large and for the first time in years. The cuts could leave nearly \$200,000 in 2008 rebates unfunded and shrink DCEO's programming support of ISEA for 2009.

Helen Cameron, co-owner of Chicago's Uncommon Ground, explained that their five-collector solar thermal system likely would not have happened without State assistance. The system has also encouraged many others to consider solar, particularly as businesses experience rising energy costs and customers cutting back.

The legislation is available through the State General Assembly website at:

<http://ilga.gov/legislation/95/SB/PDF/09500SB0790lv.pdf>

## Feds renew tax credits; lift \$2,000 residential cap

As part of the Federal government's 'bailout package (HR 1424)' the Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC) was extended for 8 years. The ITC allows homeowners, business owners or lease operators to deduct 30% of the cost of solar or small wind system from the following year's taxes.

Homeowners will no longer be subject to a \$2,000 cap that previously applied to residential installations for PV installations. In particular, homeowners contemplating PV systems 1kW or

greater in size systems will benefit from the cap's suspension.

On the retail solar business and contracting side, the length of the extension should provide more certainty in investment.

For more information about how these changes might affect you, visit the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) Investment Tax Credit website at: [http://seia.org/cs/federal\\_issues/the\\_investment\\_tax\\_credit\\_itc](http://seia.org/cs/federal_issues/the_investment_tax_credit_itc).

## ISEA, Community Energy partner to help PV pay

In addition to net metering, approved in Illinois this past spring, ISEA members who own PV systems will have another option to recoup their investment more quickly. Through a partnership with Community Energy, ISEA will bundle renewable energy credits (RECs) by ISEA members' solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Starting on January 1, 2009, ISEA will sell the credits from participating ISEA member systems to Community Energy. Community Energy will then sell the credits into its retail renewable program in Naperville. ISEA members will receive 7.5¢ for every kilowatt-hour produced, less an administrative fee to be determined and publicized. Credits will be accepted retroactive to January 1, 2008.

- If you are interested in enrolling in the program, e-mail ISEA Program Coordinator Sarah Pagliuzza at [sarah.pagliuzza@illinoisolar.org](mailto:sarah.pagliuzza@illinoisolar.org).

## New additions & thanks

ISEA membership now stands at approximately 550, which has us well on track to reach 650 members by year's end. In order to respond to the needs of ISEA's growing membership, we have been expanding our capabilities with some fresh talent.

- ISEA welcomes Bob Bair, owner of Bair Heating & Air Conditioning in Downers Grove, to the ISEA Board of Directors to assume the vacancy left by Carol Gulyas, who moved to Indiana in August.
- Congratulations to ISEA intern Sarah Pagliuzza on her promotion to Program Coordinator. Sarah will be taking an active role in membership outreach and education in the months to come.
- Thanks and appreciation to intern Megan Pitz of Northwestern University. Megan is heading up policy efforts and is assisting ISEA's Policy Committee.
- A warm welcome to new intern Katrina Paschal of ISU. Katrina is a student in ISU's renewable energy degree program. The program is the first such 4-year program in Illinois.
- Welcome to Robin Taylor, the new editor of Heliographs. Robin assumes the duties of Sarah Lozanova, who recently moved to Madison, Wisconsin.
- ISEA's Policy committee is experiencing a renaissance. Anyone interested in participating should contact Board Member and Chair Tom Kranz at [t.kranz@yahoo.com](mailto:t.kranz@yahoo.com) for details.
- Special thanks to Christine Esposito or Terracom, for donating a significant amount of time to promoting this year's solar tour.

## Making Solar Energy Affordable in Illinois

By Megan Pitz, ISEA Intern

On August 14th, more than 60 attendees participated in ISEA's first-ever panel discussion, 'Making Solar Energy Affordable in Illinois,' at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago.

Event sponsors included lead sponsor Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum and Greg Christian Catering, Goose Island Beer Company, Newleaf Natural Grocery, and Metropolis Coffee Company, all of whom are leaders in corporate sustainability in Illinois.

ISEA Executive Director Mike Johnson opened up the audience on ISEA staff additions, upcoming programs and introduced the evening's panelists.

William S. Haas (DCEO) summarized recent changes in State energy programs, notably the Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard (EEPS) and impending 2009 debut of the Illinois Power Authority (IPA). The impetus behind the authority emerged from electricity price increases associated with deregulation in 2007. After the expiration of a rate freeze in Illinois, electricity prices rose by as much as 50%. Such an increase helped energy efficiency emerge as a legislative priority in Illinois.

Haas cited rising energy costs as a key driver in not only the EEPS and establishment of the IPA, but also the State's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and interest in renewable energy.

Haas answered numerous questions on DCEO's incentive programs. Prior to program's recent suspension, DCEO provided 30% rebates on solar and small wind energy projects up to \$10,000. The program also offered and competitive grants commercial grant programs, with more available for

certain innovative applications including: building-integrated photovoltaics, large scale PV systems, initiatives for LEED building, solar thermal systems, wind development, and dedicated biomass-to-energy installations.

Pete Kadens (SoCore Energy) discussed the incentive climate necessary to enhance the commercial solar installation base in Illinois. Kadens advocated renewal and expansion of Federal tax credits and higher state funding for renewable energy to encourage solar energy development. Kadens observed that receptive markets share attributes of relatively high utility rates, Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) structures that can accommodate 50K + installations and that an aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) is also necessary.

While an expansion of Federal tax credits is now reality, expanded State incentives now seem elusive. This is far from \$11.0m seen as necessary to bring Illinois' solar incentives on par with leading states like California, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Lower wholesale and retail power prices in Illinois also represent a challenge in allowing companies like SoCore to offer competitive products. Such products fixed price structures with built-in utility price escalators. Such contracts would open up large commercial middle market opportunities in Illinois.

Lesley McCain of Community Energy introduced gave an advance announcement of agreement on the aggregation program described on the front page of this issue.

Community Energy is a major wind farm developer and a clean energy supplier to 115,000 + residences and businesses and 18 utility green power programs, and its trading agreement with ISEA provides an additional venue through which the company can pursue its goals of clean energy development.

## Upcoming events

Mark your calendars for the next ISEA

- IVI-IPO Renewable Energy Event  
(22 October, Chicago Temple)
- Solar and Wind 101 Workshops  
(1 November, ISU-Bloomington)  
(18 November, Dietz Engineers,  
Champaign)
- December ISEA Membership  
Meeting

## Put THAT in Your Pipeline and Use It

*Letter From The President*

*-Mark Burger, ISEA President*

## Illinois Ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in Nation of States With Most New Wind Energy

American Wind Energy Association releases annual rankings of wind energy leaders

## Wind Industry Update

By Tim Montague

## ELPC Campaign Results in Solar-Friendly Interconnection and Net Metering Standards

*-April ELPC Newsletter*

## Into the Wind: Quad City Area Man Makes His Own Electricity

By Alma Gaul, *Quad City Times*

## More Midwest Schools Using Wind Turbines to Cut Energy Costs

By Molly Seltzer, *Medill Reports*

Some Midwestern schools think the answer to higher electricity bills is blowing in the wind.

*-Excerpt from March 12, 2008 issue, Medill Reports*

## U of I Students to Build Solar House

By Patrick Chapman, ACES News

*-Excerpt from February 5, 2008 issue, ACES News*

### **Illinois Solar Energy Association Board of Directors**

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Membership information, updated information, and assistance in locating resources can be obtained on ISEA's website: [www.illinoissolar.org](http://www.illinoissolar.org)

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**Submissions are encouraged**, preferably by electronic means. Please email submissions for the July issue by June 12 to [editor@illinoissolar.org](mailto:editor@illinoissolar.org). Priority is given to articles about solar, wind, or other renewable energy occurring in or influencing Illinois.