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It was easy being green in Tredyffrin on this day

Published: Wednesday, March 18, 2009

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By Blair Eberhardt-Ladd

On the greenest day of the year, the reasons for celebrating reached past Irish heritage in Tredyffrin Township. A ribbon-cutting was held yesterday, St. Patrick's Day, to unveil Tredyffrin's newest "green" initiative, solar panels at Wilson Farm Park.

Awarded for its efforts towards using clean energy, Tredyffrin was given a 1.26-kilowatt solar photovoltaic system by the Clean Energy Communities Campaign. Placed on top of the roof of a building at Wilson Farm Park, these solar panels will not only help with the township's electrical bill they will also help continue to promote clean energy to other businesses and townships.

"This is a great place for these panels," said Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Warren Kampf. "Wilson Farm Park is one of the greatest aspects of Tredyffrin Township."

The Clean Energy Communities Campaign goes out into local neighborhoods and encourages individuals to sign up for clean energy. In order for Tredyffrin Township to be awarded this solar panel system, it had to join the Campaign and commit to purchase 20 percent of its electricity from clean-energy sources by the year 2010, explained Roger Clark of the TRF Sustainable Development Fund.

"Next, seven percent of the township's households, businesses and other electricity customers had to commit to buy clean energy through energy options like PECO Wind," said Clark. "Currently, over eight percent of the homes in Tredyffrin Township have signed up to purchase clean-energy options."

Members of the township, volunteers for local boards, and employees of various environmental groups were among those dedicated enough to stand in the cold and celebrate this environmental advancement. And although hard work was put in by all involved, the biggest thanks went out to residents who helped make this happen.

"Thank you to the large percentage of residents who are buying clean energy," said Molly Duffy, chair of the Tredyffrin Environmental Advisory Council. "Choosing to purchase clean energy is choosing to do something that will make a difference. You are choosing to help the future."

Meg Denney of Community Energy also thanked the residents for making this project as easy as possible. "Working with Tredyffrin has been a breeze," said Denney. "They are the best. This is the first township to have the solar-panel installation, which was made possible through Tredyffrin residents purchasing PECO wind."

Having solar panels at work is a huge step in the right direction for this township, but the hope is that this is just the beginning.

"Tredyffrin can hopefully be a catalyst for other communities to do this too," said Jonathan Edwards, vice president of SmartPower, part of the Clean Energy Communities Campaign.

Environmental-protection initiatives are becoming more important and popular as they become more understood. Getting the word out there and making sure people understand what they can be doing to help is a large part of this campaign's work.

"This campaign is all about increasing awareness," said Clark. "It's about collaboration and working together toward a common goal," said Edwards.

While the expense of the solar-energy system is \$10,000, the use of the unit as an educational tool is invaluable. The hope is that just by being in place, these solar panels will help to increase public awareness and the desire to be more environmentally conscientious. A sign, which has been placed on the building below the solar panels to help explain their importance states, "Solar Power helping make Tredyffrin a Pennsylvania Clean Energy Community."

"On behalf of the citizens, I want to thank SmartPower and the Sustainable Development Fund, and I especially want to recognize Molly Duffy," said Kampf. "She is a township volunteer on the Environmental Advisory Committee, which is the group that first brought the Clean Energy Campaign to the board, to which we unanimously agreed. We qualified for this gift because we agreed to reach 20-percent clean energy by 2010, so thank you to the citizens who have signed up for clean energy."

The presentation event concluded with a ribbon-cutting by Molly Duffy and a statement made by Andrew Voris, communications manager for SmartPower, which summed up the feelings of the day.

"It's always great to have the community come out for something that they made happen."

For more information on the Pennsylvania Clean Energy Communities Campaign, visit communities.trfund.com.

Be on the lookout in Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks counties for future solar-award installations.

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