



TLNA President Richard Linster Goes Green

Richard Linster and Patty Prime, 432 Sidney Street, have bounded into the future by converting their home into a mini-power plant that uses the sun to produce clean renewal energy.

Richard wanted to be part of the alternative energy future. The first step was an appointment with Larry Walker, Madison's "Solar Agent". His services are provided free of charge through the MadiSUN Solar Energy Program. solar@cityofmadison.com. Larry Walker evaluated their property to see if it was suitable for solar power collectors and determined that it was. Richard and Patty were on their way to "green".

Maximum power production from



A view of the solar panels on the rear roof; the rest of the panels are on the southern side of the house.

solar collectors requires that the solar panels face the sun at an optimal orientation and that the view of the sun be

unobstructed. The amount of power generated by the panels and an early payback time rely on this optimal orientation.

Having a site that works well, Richard and Patty chose to install a solar electric system known as a photovoltaic or PV system. This system produces electricity as opposed to other solar systems that produce heat, often for hot water. They installed 25 (PV) solar panels that will generate 5.8kW (kilowatts) of electricity. This is a measurement of maximum peak output. This much output will produce about 7,000 kWh

(kilowatt hours) of electricity per year. As a reference, the average amount of electricity used by a single family

responsibl**e**nvironment

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You can participate for as little as \$3.75 extra each month.





lar Clean Power Partners program. Richard and Patty installed an on-the-grid system, which means they tied into MG&E's electrical system. An off-the-grid system would mean that power generated would have to be used or stored in batteries for later use. As a clean power partner MG&E pays Richard and Patty .25 per KWh for electricity produced. All the electricity they generate is metered and put back into the utility grid. MG&E guarantees this deal for at least ten years. Based on the anticipated 5.8 kW electricity production of their system, payments would be about \$1700 per year.

WI home ranges from 5000 to 10,000 kilowatt hours per year depending on efficiencies.

There are many different reasons people have for pursuing alternative energy options. These include concern for the environment, belief in sustainability, the spiritual connection to the earth one feels when trying to be green, and the economic importance of energy independence. Even so, the financial picture detailing the cost involved is the most important factor.

Richard and Patty paid a total of \$44,000 for their solar system. Sounds intimidating, yes, but to help make solar power financially feasible there are several programs in place.

The first of these is MG&E's So-

In addition, Richard and Patty were eligible for a grant from Focus on Energy for 25% of the cost, equal to \$11000. They are also eligible for a tax credit from the federal government for 30% of the cost. Translation: \$44,000 - 25%, = \$33,000 - 30% = \$23,100 total cost to them for their solar system. Earnings in revenue of \$1700 per year means a payback time on their investment will be 13.5 years. With these incentives, investing in solar energy looks like a very good deal. And is it not amazing to think about having your own power plant making pollution free electricity? What's more, twenty years from now when Linster is thinking about retiring, he will have his solar panels making money for him.

Richard and Patty hired Full Spec-

trum Solar to do the installation of their solar system. They also had Focus on Energy do an energy audit and followed their advice by adding insulation and other energy conservation measures. Besides saving money, they emphasized the value of making their home feel more comfortable all of the time.

With the emergence of interest in nuclear power plants I'm very grateful to Richard and Patty for showing us a much better alternative.

- Joe Brogan

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