



GODDARD SCHOOL IN WEST WINDSOR INSTALLS 174 SOLAR PANELS IN \$250K PROJECT

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Ed Sirak, owner of Goddard School of West Windsor walks between the new solar panels on the roof of his facility on Thursday, June 9, 2011. Martin Griff / The Times of Trenton

WEST WINDSOR — Going green has been a growing trend among schools and businesses in the Mercer County area, and The Goddard School® of West Windsor is among the latest to try to reduce its carbon footprint with the completed installation of 174 solar panels last week.

“Going green and caring about the environment is certainly the right thing to do,” said Ed Sirak, owner of West Windsor Goddard School on Windsor-Edinburg Road.

The initial idea for the solar project came from Goddard’s corporate headquarters. The project was financed in cooperation with TD Bank.

The solar panels, 5 feet by 3 feet each, cost Goddard a total of \$250,000. They cover 3,141 square feet of the school’s newly renovated, flat, white, rubber rooftop, with room to expand.

The installation was completed in less than two weeks by Freedom Energy Partners, an energy-savings business that services companies and schools in the Greater Delaware Valley.

According to Sirak, the switch to solar will avoid the production of 918 tons of carbon dioxide over 25 years, roughly the effect of planting 4,600 trees or eliminating 1.8 million miles of driving.

It’s been calculated that the energy produced by the solar panels will result in a 35 percent reduction in energy costs at Goddard, Sirak said.

“We have an online system that tells us the amount that it produces daily,” he said.

Plans are under way to compile a collection of photos taken of the project from start to finish. In addition, data will be provided to show the children and their families who visit the school what the solar panels are doing each day.

“Now that we have this, we can add that to our educational future,” said Sirak.

A number of other schools in the area are taking up the solar challenge as well. As part of its 2008 solar referendum, all seven schools in the Lawrence Township Public School District have installed solar panels. And Rider University is working on installing 2,640 ground-mounted solar panels on its campus in Lawrence.

Schools aren't alone in their battle against carbon emissions. Publishing company McGraw-Hill announced recently that it plans to create in East Windsor what it expects to be the largest solar power generation plant in the Western Hemisphere.

And Lasley Brahaney Architecture and Construction in Princeton was recently awarded LEED certification after installing a 44-solar panel photovoltaic system on its roof, among other energy-efficient improvements it has made. The LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system of the U.S. Green Building Council, is a nationally accepted benchmark for evaluating sustainability in construction projects.