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A photograph of three people standing in front of a large array of solar panels in a field. The panels are tilted and mounted on a metal frame. The background shows a grassy field with some snow patches and bare trees under a clear blue sky. The people are dressed in winter clothing: a woman in a red jacket, a woman in a bright yellow-green jacket, and a man in a dark blue jacket.

Going solar:
Abundant
energy just falls
from the sky

A West Middlesex company hooks up homeowners who discover that sometimes cheap energy just falls from the sky

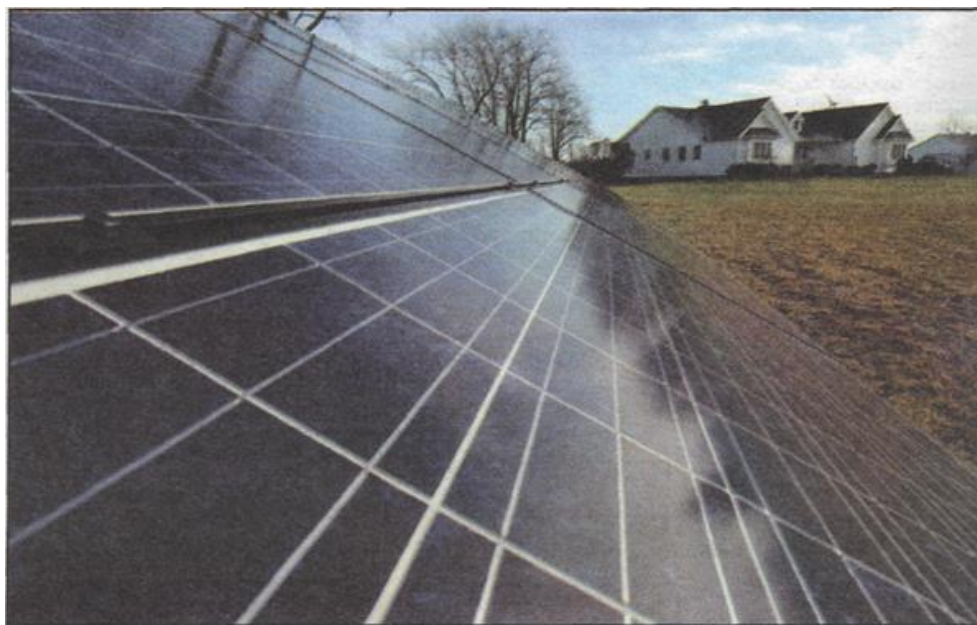
Story by Carol Ann Gregg

EVERYONE'S GROWING NEED FOR ENERGY seems to be paralleled by the growing cost for energy.

Then there's Dennis and Anita Shaw.

The Deer Creek Township couple has found such an ample, economical source of electricity that some days the power company actually buys it from *them*.

To find this new power source, the Shaws merely looked to the sky. And they couldn't be happier with what they found.



The array of solar panels that powers the Shaw home in Deer Creek Township

Last May, GGE Inc. of West Middlesex installed a 24-panel array of photovoltaic panels that capture energy from the sun and convert it to electricity.

GGE's owner Adriann Perry and her husband Dale design the systems and do nearly all the manual labor on the projects. GGE was established in 1993 as an earth-friendly, green company. The name behind the initials says it all: God's Green Earth.

Besides striving to save the planet, they also believe in supporting area businesses, buying all their pipe for panel support frames from the Shenango Valley's Wheatland Tube Co.

The solar panel array is a short distance from the Shaws' house. The brains of the system is in the basement. That is where it ties into the electrical system of the house and connects with the electric meter outside.

Mrs. Shaw enjoys checking the meter that records the amount of excess electricity that goes out to the power grid for other energy customers. The power company deducts the value of those kilowatt hours of electricity from the Shaws' regular electric bill.

The upfront costs of such a system can be daunting, and the system takes a while before it starts paying for

itself.

"Some people buy expensive clothes and jewelry but that's not me," Mrs. Shaw said. "I want to use my money to improve the environment. To leave things better than when I came."

The Shaws moved to their rural home six years ago after living in Hermitage for many years. Mrs. Shaw was a school nurse with the Farrell Area School District for 31 years. She now works several days a week in her husband's audiology office.

About two years ago, the Shaws had a windmill installed to help save some energy costs.

"Some people don't like the sound of the wind turbine. I like the rhythmic sound of the blades," Mrs. Shaw said.

The Shaws started to look for additional ways to reduce their impact on the planet while saving energy costs. The solar installation contributes to the ongoing improvements to the property, which is surrounded by farmland and woods.

Mrs. Perry from GGE said each installation is designed specifically for the customer.

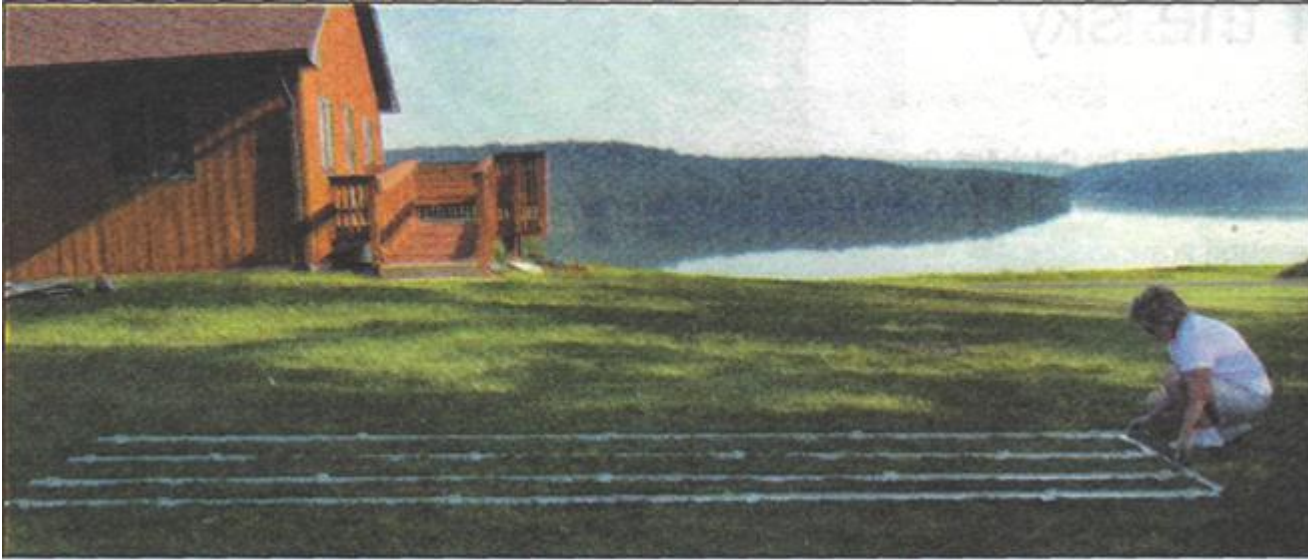
"It depends on how much electricity is needed to meet the needs of the customer," her husband continued.

The Shaws' installation is mounted on the ground, while at another local installation at the Lee and Carol Weber farm the panels are mounted on the roof of his two-year-old, 2,400-square-foot house.

The installation went online Oct 28, 2010, at the Webers' all-electric home.



GGE owner Adriann Perry, right, talks with Anita and Dennis Shaw talk outside their home in Deer Creek Township where GGE installed a solar power system.



Mrs. Perry assembles the gridwork that will hold roof-mounted panels for a 2-kilowatt system at Prince Gaiitzan State Park in Cambria County.

"My wife and I wanted to go 'green'" Weber said. "We looked into wind power, but that wasn't for us."

The Webers did their homework, at-tending home shows and visiting at length with vendors to explore using solar power.

"I attended a workshop at Westminster College," he said. "It was interesting, but people at the workshop paid to be there and Westminster ended up having solar system installed.

"That's where I met Adriann. She and I weren't afraid of heights, so we were on the roof installing the rails," he said.

The Webers had talked to other in-stallers but the others all wanted to use ground-mounted panels.

The Weber installation cost \$63,010, but the Perrys helped them receive government grants to offset about half of that cost

"We received a \$17,500 state grant and a federal tax credit from IRS of a little over \$19,000," Weber said.

The state incentives result from an initiative of former Gov. Ed Rendell to reduce fossil fuel use 25 percent by the year 2025 across the commonwealth.

Solar panels respond to any light, not just blazing midday sunshine, so they are producing electricity every day. Weber checks and records data from the gauges daily. On a recent cloudy, rainy day the grid produced 12,000 kilowatts and on a sunny day it produces 70,000 kilowatts.

The Webers' array of 26 panels is producing more power than they can use. They sell their unused electricity to the power company, which settles up with them at the end of the year.

Because of their solar system, Weber said they could also sell Renewable Solar Energy Credits, though they haven't done so yet. Power companies can buy those credits to offset the emissions from their smokestacks.

The Webers are very pleased with the results. "Adriann and Dale were so nice to work with," Weber said of GGE's Perrys. "They helped us through the many hoops to receive the grants that are available."

GGE got its first opportunity to make a name in solar power when it won the bid to install solar systems in four Pennsylvania state parks.

"There was a grant program available to parks to install solar systems as demonstrations for the public," Dale Perry said. They installed pole-mounted grids with a tracking system at Codorus State Park in York County, Prince Gallitzin State Park in Cambria County, French Creek State Park in the Schuylkill Highlands and Lackawanna State Park, located north of Scranton.

Customers are part of the project throughout. The Perrys want to provide customers with the system that will fill their needs.

Since the couple does nearly all the work, the reputation of the business depends on having satisfied customers.

"The first question everyone has is, 'How much is this going to cost?' I can't give them a quote until they tell us what they want," Dale said. "They are buying their electric power for the next 25 years."

Being a green source of power is just one of the benefits the company's owners cite for installing a solar electric system. Other power also:

- Increases property values.
- May qualify for rebates and grants.
- Reduces the electric bill.
- Reduces carbon dioxide emissions.
- Reduces dependence on foreign oil.

This West Middlesex company has a long history in environmentally friendly projects. They offer customers free consultations, site assessment, complete system design and installations and they handle all the paper work to help their customers take advantage of the incentives available through grants and tax credits.

Or, in other words, everything under the sun a customer needs to know about solar power.



Adriann Perry uses a Bobcat to hoist solar panels for a 2-kilowatt, pole-mounted system at Codorus State Park in Hanover, Pa.



The 10 kw system at Lee and Carol Weber's Blue Roof Farm is mounted on the roof of a barn.



At left, Anita Shaw checks the meters outside her house. Electricity from a power company is used when needed. But when the panels produce excess electricity, the power company takes it and pays for it.

God's Green Earth Solar Power Systems

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