



For Immediate Release

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Valley Homeowners Switching to Solar & Driving on Sunshine

Solarize Santa Ynez Valley Program Offers Fixed, Discounted Price For Solar Panels

In preparation for the summer sunshine and heat, Valley residents are going solar through a group purchasing program called Solarize Santa Ynez Valley (Solarize SYV). Run by the Community Environmental Council (CEC) and the Santa Ynez Valley Alliance (SYVA), Solarize SYV makes it easier and more affordable to go solar by harnessing the benefits of collective purchasing. The organizations have partnered with two local installers, REC Solar and Solarponics Energy Systems, to offer Valley homeowners a fixed, discounted price for solar electricity.

Thirteen valley homeowners have already signed contracts through this program, which runs until June 30 -- including two who also recently purchased electric vehicles (EVs) in conjunction with their switch to solar. Tim Foraker of Los Alamos and Richard Kelly of Solvang found the discounted Solarize pricing so attractive that they have sized their solar arrays to power both their homes and their EVs, so that once the solar panels are installed, both will be "driving on sunshine."

Foraker opted for a 7.0 kilowatt (kW) system from Solarponics Energy Systems to power his Los Alamos home and a newly acquired all-electric Ford Focus. A financial professional at Edward Jones, Foraker's incentive to go solar was "Purely a financial one. I calculated that my investment in solar and switching to an EV would pay for itself in just five years." He and his wife also calculated that their annual rate of return is better than 20 percent. Given the warranties and production guarantees of the panels, Foraker sees the decision to go solar as a "risk free investment -- and in this day and age there are no risk free investments, particularly one with a 20 percent annual return."

Similarly, Rick Kelly and his family -- self-described "energy hawks" -- have always looked to improve energy efficiency around the house and are currently switching all their lighting to LEDs. Intrigued by solar electricity, Kelly, a business manager at UCSB, attended a Solarize homeowner workshop hosted by CEC and SYVA. While there, another homeowner brought up the topic of combining solar and EVs and it spurred Kelly to do his own research. Kelly was intrigued by the all-electric Toyota RAV4's range because it covers his daily commute over the San Marcos Pass and back in a single charge. He will be installing a 7.0 kW system with REC Solar for his Solvang home and his new RAV4 EV. The system is sized to power the 400 to 500 miles his family drives in the EV a week, meaning Kelly can use his solar system to cover all of his EV charging needs.

Kelly found the Solarize program simplified the decision to go solar. "It was great to have CEC as an outside resource in the process. The information they provided was very helpful, and it was great to have a third party who had my interests (and not just profit) in mind. Everyone I talked to, from the CEC staff to the installers, was knowledgeable, helpful and experienced." Now the Kellys will be able to couple their efficiency upgrades with clean solar generation for their home and vehicle.

For anyone interested in learning more about solar, energy efficiency, financing, and electric vehicles, CEC and SYVA are offering one **final free solar workshop on Wednesday, June 5** at the Solvang Veterans Hall, Legion Wing from **6:30 – 8:00 pm**. Nearly 80 Valley homeowners have already attended these workshops.

Megan Birney, CEC's Energy Manager, hopes that more Valley residents take advantage of the program before it closes on June 30, "There has never been a better opportunity for homeowners in the Valley to start using the sun to power their homes. Through this program CEC and SYVA have made going solar as easy as possible and CEC is available throughout the process as an unbiased resource." Birney also notes that both solar contractors, REC Solar and Solarponics Energy Systems, have been vetted through a rigorous application process, ensuring that Valley homeowners will be working with quality installers.

Solarize Santa Ynez Valley is the fourth solar group-purchasing program CEC has run on the Central Coast. Over 100 homeowners have already switched to Solar through CEC's Solarize program. Birney touts the benefits the program offers homeowners. "The great thing about Solarize is that we are empowering homeowners to take control of their energy use and electricity bills. Getting a proposal is totally free and can accurately map out the costs and savings of switching to solar for your home and, if you are interested, your vehicle." She encourages interested homeowners to attend the June 5th workshop or contact CEC directly to learn how to take part in the program.

Interested homeowners can learn more at www.solarizesyv.org or by calling (805) 963-0583 x 105.