



Empowering communities in need to meet their basic requirements of health, education, and economic opportunity by providing renewable energy and energy efficiency services, equipment, and training.

GRID Alternatives Newsletter

Generating Renewable Ideas for Development Alternatives

Fall 2005
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Message from Tim Sears, Program Director and Co-Founder

Greetings from GRID Alternatives! The months since our last newsletter have been some of our busiest yet. With the help of our many volunteers and supporters, we've had some amazing successes. In June alone, we installed 11 solar electric systems as part of the Solar Affordable Housing Program! We have also faced our share of frustrations in the last few months, primarily around getting rebates approved from the California Energy Commission. We are looking forward to putting these difficulties behind us, and scheduling some more solar installations this fall.

As GRID Alternatives continues its work of bringing energy efficiency and renewable energy to low-income Californians, we are watching with interest developments in our national and state energy policies. The recently signed national Energy Bill and California's SB 1, which is making its way through the state



A volunteer measuring for fitting of the solar panels on a roof top.

legislature, will have a significant impact on all of us who are working on energy related issues.

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GRID Alternatives Project Updates

The Solar Affordable Housing Program

The Solar Affordable Housing Program has been very active during the last few months installing solar electric systems for low-income home owners in the Bay Area to help lower their utility costs. Low-income home owners struggle with rising electricity costs, and GRID Alternatives is working hard to keep them in the Bay Area, where many of these families have grown up and raised their children.

Between March and June, we completed twelve solar electric systems ranging from 1.1 kW to 1.6kW, which reduce electricity costs by up to 50% and greenhouse gas emissions by over 147,000 pounds of CO₂ per system. Global warming is one of the most critical environmental issues facing the world today, and each of these projects is a step toward

environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

GRID Alternatives provides access to low-interest loans and volunteer labor in order to make solar energy affordable. Volunteers go through a two-day training session where they learn the basics of solar power, system design and installation. GRID Alternatives' staff provides expertise with obtaining permits, loans, and rebates to make the process easy for the home owner.

On March 11th and 12th, GRID Alternatives installed a 1.5kW system for eight low-income

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Message from Tim Sears, Program Director and Co-Founder (continued)

Although, many of the provisions in the Energy Bill tend to favor “traditional” energy sources such as coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear power, there is a 30% tax credit for residential solar electric systems. This tax credit greatly improves the economics of solar power, and should help the solar industry maintain or increase the impressive growth rate it has enjoyed over the last 20 years.

California’s SB 1, also referred to as the California Million Solar Roofs bill, sets a goal of over a million solar systems installed in California, including half of all new homes built by 2017. The bill has been approved by the State Senate and is making its way through the Assembly. While there are some significant

sticking points that remain, the bill appears to have widespread support. If passed, the bill would provide long-term funding stability to the solar rebate program, and it should ensure that California maintains its position as a global leader in solar energy.

With your help, GRID Alternatives is looking forward to continuing to bring the benefits of clean, renewable solar power and energy efficiency to our low-income neighbors most in need of relief from ever increasing energy costs.

Thank you,
Tim Sears

The Solar Affordable Housing Program (continued)

home-owners on Mission Street in San Francisco thanks to the help of Marin Solar and Solar Energy International. Habitat for Humanity San Francisco built the condos and partnered with GRID Alternatives to lower utility costs and reduce pollution by installing solar. The solar electric system powers a common meter, which helps these home-owners reduce their \$1,000 monthly utility costs. GRID Alternatives would like to thank Don Barch for donating racks and pulling the permit for the installation. Thanks to the volunteers from Solar Energy International for their hard work and enthusiasm.

On June 3rd and 4th, GRID Alternatives worked with East Bay Habitat for Humanity to install, in two days, solar electric systems for nine Livermore families, our biggest project yet. The nine systems range from 1.1 kW to 1.6 kW in size, reducing annual electricity costs by \$300. Each system uses 12 Sharp photovoltaic panels and one Sunny Boy inverter, paid for in part by a grant from PG&E.

Thanks to the experienced solar installers from Atlas-Pellizzari Electric, EcoEnergies, IBEW Local 595 for Alameda County, Light Energy Systems, Marin Solar, SOlectric Electrical Contractors, and Sun First who helped guide the volunteers during the installations. Over 100 volunteers participated in the installation. East Bay Habitat is dedicated to greening all of their new developments. GRID Alternatives is committed to partnering with Habitat to provide solar installation for their new homes. The massive turnout of volunteers from GRID Alternatives, East Bay Habitat for Humanity and Americorps shows how much you care about your communities and your dedication to renewable energy. We could not do it without you.

View the 1,000 photographs of volunteers installing all nine systems in Livermore, taken by summer intern Erika Carrillo, at <http://gridalternatives.shutterfly.com>.

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On June 4th and 5th, volunteers from GRID Alternatives and East Bay Habitat for Humanity installed solar panels in Livermore for habitat’s development. Over 100 volunteers participated in the project.

Our program is designed not only to provide affordable energy efficiency for the homes of low income families but we also connect volunteers from the community to help with installations.

The Solar Affordable Housing Program (continued)

On June 16th, 17th, 25th and 26th, GRID Alternatives volunteers installed solar electric systems for two low-income home owners in Pleasanton. These were the first two installations for our Pleasanton program, which will serve 17 additional homeowners over the coming years. The renewable and sustainable 1.6kW solar electric systems will reduce the monthly utility expenses for a single mother of two and a family of four. Thanks to EcoEnergies for providing their contractor expertise to help mount the systems on concrete tile. We would also like to thank all the volunteers that make this program possible.

Your hard work has made the Solar Affordable Housing Program a success. We will be contacting volunteers in the next few months to participate in more installations.

Energy Efficiency Team with Rebuilding Together

On the third year anniversary of their partnership, Rebuilding Together and GRID Alternatives worked together in April, to implement energy saving measures for low-income seniors in both Oakland and San Francisco. By increasing energy efficiency and improving water conservation, these seniors can live more comfortably and safely while saving on average \$180 per year. These measures also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 24,000 pounds per year. The success of the program demonstrates that sustainable energy use can help low and fixed-income seniors reduce their monthly expenses.

Measures implemented included:

- Installing Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs
- Installing Programmable Thermostats
- Cleaning Refrigerator Coils
- Installing Water Heater Blankets
- Resetting Water Heater Temperature

- Insulating Hot Water Pipes
- Installing Low Flow Showerheads
- Installing Faucet Aerators
- Installing Toilet Flow Reducers
- Weatherstripping Windows
- Weatherstripping Doors
- Caulking Cracks around Windows and Doors
- Sealing Outlets and Light Switches
- Replacing Furnace Filters

In San Francisco, volunteers served 22 homes. Each home will save \$189 per year on utility bills with 12,000 fewer kWh used per year. CO₂ emissions will be reduced by 17,750 pounds per year because 2,440 fewer therms of natural gas will be used. These basic measures reduce cost and energy demand, which benefits the environment that we all share.

In Oakland, volunteers from Cliff Bar served 15 homes with basic energy and water conservation measures. Greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 14,078 pounds per year. The annual electricity savings is 14,140 kWh per year and the annual cost savings is \$2,760. Each home will save \$184 per year.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made the lives of low-income seniors a little bit easier. As always, it was a pleasure working with the Rebuilding Together staff and volunteers. Thanks to Cliff Bar for providing free Cliff Bars and volunteers for the Oakland program and Technical Consumer Products (TCP) for donating all the compact fluorescent lamps.

The Home Depot continued their generous support of this program with \$1,000 to pay for supplies. Your efforts have made this program possible and we cannot thank you enough. We look forward to seeing you again next year.

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Individual Donations

Please continue your support of GRID Alternatives with a monetary donation. Your contribution will reduce the utility bills of low-income families, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



A volunteer installs a water heater blanket in San Francisco for the Energy Efficiency Team with Rebuilding Together. Measures like these will help reduce the cost of utilities by \$189 per year for low and fixed-income seniors

Energy Action

2005 marks the second year that GRID Alternatives participated in the Partnership for Energy Affordability in Multi-family Housing's "Energy Action" program. Collaborators include GRID Alternatives, ICF Consulting, The Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH), the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI), the California Coalition for Rural Housing (CCRH), Center for Energy and Environment (CEE), and kW Engineering. Energy Action delivers a comprehensive portfolio of technical, financial, and training services to developers and non-profit owners

and managers of affordable multi-family housing in PG&E service territory, including cities in the Bay Area and Central Valley. The program offers both customized and prescriptive incentives, as well as short-term financing assistance. GRID Alternatives provides energy efficiency assessments and on-call diagnostics for specific problems related to energy efficiency. Measures identified from these audits will reduce CO₂ emissions by 3.1 million pounds per year and save \$380,000 dollars in energy costs. GRID Alternatives has audited and provided technical assistance to 65 affordable housing facilities in the Bay Area.



Tim Sears, the co-founder of GRID Alternatives, offering instructions to volunteers on how to wire the inverter.



Thanks to the experienced solar installers from Atlas-Pellizzari Electric, EcoEnergies, IBEW Local 595 for Alameda County, Light Energy Systems, Marin Solar, SOlectric Electrical Contractors, and Sun First who helped guide the volunteers during the installations.

GRID Alternatives News Items

GRID Alternatives has entered a growth phase with the expansion of our board and staff.

Expansion of Board

GRID Alternatives is pleased to announce that Loretta Gallegos, executive director for Rebuilding Together Peninsula, has joined our board of directors. Prior to joining Rebuilding Together, Loretta worked in the design/build field at architectural firms. She is a graduate of Catholic University's School of Architecture, and was the first woman in the U.S. General Services Administration's national construction management training program. She is also a past president of the Palo Alto Junior Chamber of Commerce. Welcome Loretta.

Development Director

Through the support of the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund, GRID Alternatives has hired a part-time Development Director. Gillian Moxey will work with us to develop a corporate sponsorship campaign, as well as a donor database and grants management system. Gillian has more than 14 years experience providing a variety of fundraising and management services for nonprofit organizations. She has an MBA in Sustainable Management from Presidio School of Management and a BA in Political Science from New York University. Gillian previously worked for Community Awareness & Treatment Services, Inc. and the Arthritis Foundation in San Francisco. She is a member of the National Black MBA Association and Presidio Net Impact. Welcome Gillian.

Summer Intern

This June, Erika Carrillo joined GRID Alternatives as a summer intern. Erika provided database and administrative support, as well as prepared the summer edition of the newsletter. She is a senior studying International Relations and Photojournalism at Boston University. She is dedicated to renewable energies and sustainability. Erika has been a joy to work with, and we wish her the best of

luck as she leaves to participate in a sustainability program in Costa Rica.

Pro Bono IT Support

We would like to give a special thanks to Alex Ramos for keeping GRID Alternatives' technology working. In addition to answering questions about everything from e-mail to disk drives, Alex has generously donated a laser printer, a printer server, a network storage center and a network hub.

Newsletter Layout Assistance

Many thanks to Berhan Haile for again volunteering to help us with the design and layout of this newsletter. Also, thanks to Natalie Chi for the volunteer work involve in the newsletter and brochures.

Contractors License

GRID Alternatives is in the process of getting its C-10 electrical contractors license. Program Director, Tim Sears, has passed the license test, and we are in the process of getting bonded and insured. This license will allow us to contract directly with our clients for the solar installations and should facilitate the rebate and permitting process.

Funding Awarded

We are pleased to announce several new grants, which includes: The City of Pleasanton- \$35,500; San Mateo County- \$10,000; Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund- \$20,000; and San Francisco Department of Environment- \$75,000. We have additional grant applications submitted to the Oak Hill Fund, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Tri-Valley Community Foundation. With the support of all our funders, GRID Alternatives can meet its mission of empowering communities in need to meet their basic requirements of health, education, and economic opportunity by providing renewable energy and energy efficiency services, equipment, and training.

Tax deductible donations can be made by mail or online:

GRID Alternatives
6120 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94121
www.gridalternatives.org/support.htm

We also accept donations of computers or office supplies through Firefly Fundraising Services at (415) 863-1734 or donations@fireflysales.com. Pickups can be scheduled. For more information go to www.fireflysales.com.

Ask your employer if they match gifts. Let us know if they do and we can take it from there.



Volunteers gathered waiting for instructions at the East Bay Habitat for Humanity site in Livermore. The nine systems range from 1.1kW to 1.6kW in size, reducing annual electricity costs by \$300.

Continued Volunteer Assistance

We could not do what we do without the support of our volunteers. If you want to learn how to install a solar electric system or if you want to help low-income families in the Bay Area, consider volunteering. E-mail us at info@gridalternatives.org to get on our mailing list. We will be sending out information on upcoming installations. No experience is required, but those with construction experience or a C-10 contractor's license are needed. By helping your community reduce their monthly utility bills you can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lead the way to a sustainable future.



Our wonderful volunteers carrying rails for the solar installation in Livermore. The nine systems range from 1.1kW to 1.6kW in size, reducing annual electricity costs by \$300.



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