



Solar Panels Encourage Pennsylvania Family To Think Differently About Energy Use

Homeowners serve as their own power company

For the Davidson/Swim family, solar power is more than an efficient means of acquiring energy: it is a natural extension of their values. Janet Swim recently chaired the American Psychology Association's Task Force on Global Climate Change. Jeff Davidson has been interested in green technology for years. Climate change, environmental concerns, and a desire for less reliance on foreign resources have combined to make this interest progressively more acute.

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— Jeff Davidson, Homeowner

Jeff explains, "Fossil-based energy is increasingly unappealing. Increased oil exploration either in precious areas of the earth's environment or deep under the oceans seems like a poor approach

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to supplying future energy needs. We are sacrificing resources we should preserve without looking at alternatives.”

He continues, “Our family had considered implementing a renewable energy system for several years. We were seeking access to non-polluting power at a reasonable cost. We also wanted to prototype a system others could consider or adopt for residential use.”

The couple’s enthusiasm for solar energy extends to the kids. Chris, age 13, likes the panels because although they are expensive in the short term, they are profitable in the long term. Cassidy, age 12, likes being able to have clean energy that does not pollute.

Janet and Jeff spoke with a number of contactors, and ultimately chose Envinity for their blend of expertise in solar and contracting skill. Jeff says, “We were pleased with Envinity’s knowledge of solar power panel manufacturers and hardware. They also knew the various state and federal tax programs that encourage solar adoption and reduce costs.”

He continues, “We knew people that had worked with Envinity, and had confidence that the company had the contracting skill to carry out the project with professionalism and a high standard. We had a very positive experience with Envinity through all stages of the process – from sales and information through design and installation.”

Jeff says, “Envinity designed the panels and the supporting hardware in a highly organized and elegant manner, and promptly built the project with attention to the many details involved. As homeowners and financiers, it was easy to learn more about the photovoltaic panels, inverters, and wiring. Our children were also able to see and observe the installation process, which I think helped demystify the technology for them and us.”

Jeff explains, “We like the software, the simplicity, and the warranty. The SunPower Monitoring software easily provides production summaries on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis, and lets the user export the data for further analysis. The system operates without intervention and will report if it needs attention. The warranty on the panels takes the risk out of producing power for the next 25 years.”

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Jeff notes, “It’s surprising how fun it is to operate your own power company. It changes your relationship with power – something that we didn’t anticipate. Just like a handmade gift or work of art is special – the power we make with our own panels is special. I also think knowing what it takes to make power makes us value it and preserve it more.”

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