

## Solarize Chatham returns on tax day

Grassroots program installed 330 kilowatts of solar power in 2014

On April 15, clean energy nonprofit NC WARN will launch a repeat of its successful Solarize Chatham program. In March, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution praising the Solarize Chatham program and urging more citizens and businesses to install solar.

The "return" of Solarize on Tax Day is fitting, since Federal and state solar tax credits of 30 percent and 35 percent, respectively, can create a quick payback for those who are able to use them.

John Graybeal of Pittsboro, who installed solar at his home last year as part of Solarize Chatham, and who proposed the resolution to the Board of Commissioners, says: "My calculation was that our savings over the system's 25-year lifetime will amount to many thousands of dollars. We know that preventing an unacceptable increase in global temperatures

will require a massive switch to renewable energy, so a homeowner does both himself/herself and mankind a big favor by installing solar panels."

NC WARN and other grassroots organizations across North Carolina have adopted the highly successful Solarize model that expands solar power on homes and businesses, cuts greenhouse gases, adds local jobs and helps avoid more rate increases for all customers. Since mid-2013, the groups have added over 1.5 megawatts of new solar power to more than 300 rooftops around the state.

During NC WARN's 2014 Solarize Chatham program, 460 county residents signed up for a free solar assessment. Of those, 64 homes and businesses decided to install a total of 330 kW of solar power – which will produce the energy equivalent of 180 tons of coal each year.

With the state tax credit slated to expire at the end of this year, Warren says there has never been a better time to go solar in North Carolina. "At the same time," he adds, "there is hope on the horizon for even broader adoption of solar if the legislature passes the recently-introduced 'Energy Freedom Act' that would eliminate obstacles to 'third-party' or 'no-money-down' solar deals in North Carolina, putting solar within reach of all homeowners."

The Solarize model uses neighbor-to-neighbor marketing and group purchasing power to lower the price of solar. The price drops further as more people participate. The 2014 Chatham program was the first in the state to reach the maximum discount level,



Installers from Yes! Solar Solutions at work in Chatham last year.

PHOTO BY JERRY MARKATOS

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and the program installed more kilowatts on more rooftops than any Solarize program in North Carolina to date.

NC WARN's Solarize programs use high-quality equipment installed by two of North Carolina's top rooftop solar installers: Yes! Solar Solutions of Cary and Southern Energy Management of Morrisville. The installers pay a small portion of each contract price into an NC WARN fund to help low-income homeowners and renters install solar power.

NC WARN members and volunteers from Central Carolina Community College's Sustainable Technologies program promoted Solarize last year with house parties, information sessions, and outreach at farmers markets and other community events, and will do the same this year.

Warren notes, "The support of volunteers from CCCC, and the dedication of Chatham residents to conserving the resources of the planet, sent this campaign soaring beyond all others in the state."

Cathy Markatos, who also solarized last year, has been a Chatham solar supporter for a long time. "Rays of Hope, together with Energy from Heaven, installed solar panels, window boxes, and solar hot water heaters through many parts of Chatham County in the 1980s," she recalls.

In fact, the Commissioners' resolution linked Solarize with those earlier Chatham efforts, when more than 1,000 volunteers worked to make Chatham County the "solar capital of North Carolina."

Thirty years later, the county has earned that title all over again.

Learn more about Solarize and see the text of the Board of Commissioners resolution at [www.solarize-nc.org](http://www.solarize-nc.org).

Now in its 27th year, NC WARN's mission urgency is to induce Charlotte-based Duke Energy — now the world's largest corporate utility — to make a strong shift to clean, affordable energy in order to help avert climate tipping points and ongoing rate hikes.

— Sally Robertson, NC Warn



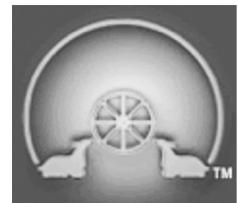
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