



Project Goal

Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative's (PAREI) Energy Raiser project has the goal to help members of communities reduce and produce energy.

Brief Description

The Energy Raiser is a project where volunteers from the community come together to install a solar thermal renewable energy system on a hosts' home, which make hot water from the sun's rays. On average this saves the burning of 200 gallons of oil or its electrical equivalent per year.



Since 2005 PAREI has hosted 35 Energy Raisers in 11 towns around Plymouth, NH. Energy Raisers have many benefits that include making solar energy more accessible to the average person, while also teaching homeowners about the inner workings and benefits of solar technology. They reduce the cost of installation for low and middle-income families since they are performed by a group of volunteers. All the homeowners have to pay for is the equipment. It is also great for educating and motivating others on what could be done on their own homes. It exposes local trades people of communities to solar installations, which could allow them to offer solar installation as one of their services. They strengthen communities by giving people the opportunity to work towards tangible goals that benefit the local economy and environment.

The first step of the Energy Raisers project is a solar site visit. A member from PAREI determines the feasibility of using a solar energy system on that site. They also discuss with the homeowner where the solar collector should be mounted, along with the best route for the pipes, and what size collector is right for that particular home. They also determine what materials that are currently being used in the system can be reused. Once the site is determined feasible the Energy Raiser coordinator meets again to discuss what will happen on the day of the energy raiser, along with what should be done prior for setup.



The homeowner then hosts a setup night where the schematic is finalized, the parts list is reviewed, and the tasks are determined for the team leaders. The day of the Energy Raiser a volunteer meeting is held for introduction, house keeping items, overall goals, and to determine teams for the project.

Energy Raiser Projects are based on the concept of paying it forward. Before you can host your own Energy Raiser where a solar installation is performed on your house, you have to volunteer at least three times. Then after you host you pay it forward. This has created a constant cycle of old/new volunteers. In the end knowledge is shared, cost is reduced, and access is gained.

Moving forward PAREI will be maintaining these systems that they set up, and learning to be good stewards. They rely on word to mouth for continued projects and installations.

At the time that PAREI started the government was looking for organizations like them who they could provide funding for. They called the Regional Department of Energy and were told about an initiative that was started under the Clinton Era. They were given a \$35,000 grant as part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Million Solar Roofs Initiative. This initiative's purpose was to install solar energy systems in one million U.S. buildings by the year 2010. They have also received government support through the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, which was established through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning was excited about the start up of this organization because they believed not enough was going on locally or statewide. They saw PAREI as a group that they could point to as an example for future communities.

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Lessons to Share

Starting small and then adding on worked well for PAREI. They believe that you should plan for your energy future like you would for your financial future. It was important for them to create a market before the



usual market indicators told them to. They made an effort to not be controversial. They decided to work with the people who wanted the help and information, and then allow them to talk and convince their friends to join. They believe in the saying, “When the people lead the leaders will follow.” They believe that it was crucial at the start to stay away from controversy.



The Energy Raiser projects are a success because they are bringing the community together to build solar thermal energy renewable systems, while also teaches people the ways to reduce and produce energy. The project is growing in the number of volunteers and people are paying it forward.

At the start it was important to identify the needs of the community through info sessions. They also held an energy exchange for members, which was attended by 40 people. It was important that the community had enthusiasm and desire for information on how they could conserve energy, how they could reduce consumption, and how they could learn about renewable energy.

For More Information

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plymouthenergy.org

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PO Box 753
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The Community Served: Plymouth, N.H.

Role in the Region: Socioeconomic Center, College Town

Total Population	6,990		
Median Age	21.7		
	2000	2010	Change
Total Households	1,678	1,953	275
Family Households	941	974	33
Nonfamily Households	737	979	242
	1999 Median Household Income	2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates	
Median Household Income	35,618	41,709	6,091

