

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Scott Tess

Environmental Sustainability Manager

City of Urbana

stess@urbanaindinois.us

217-384-2381

Solar Urbana-Champaign Bulk Purchase Program Returns in 2019

Urbana, IL– May 14, 2019. The successful Solar Urbana-Champaign group purchasing program is available again in 2019. Since 2016, the program has led to the installation of over 1.6 megawatts of solar power on 183 properties across Champaign and Piatt Counties. The program has educated hundreds of individuals about the financial and environmental benefits of solar power and helped people save on solar installations through volume pricing.

“This is a great way to make solar energy installations faster, easier, and cheaper for homeowners and business owners, said Scott Tess, Environmental Sustainability Manager for the City of Urbana. “It’s interesting when we see new installations cluster together. The more folks see solar installations, the more interested they are in solar for their own roof.”

To increase awareness across Champaign and Piatt Counties, Solar Urbana-Champaign partnered with Champaign-based Prairie Rivers Network (PRN), which champions clean, healthy rivers and lakes and safe drinking water to benefit the people and wildlife of Illinois.

“Illinois’ Future Energy Jobs Act provides new economic incentives for rooftop solar energy allowing even more people to take advantage and do something positive for their household budget and for the environment,” said Amanda Pankau an Energy Campaign Coordinator with PRN.

The program has also partnered with Common Ground Food Co-op, Faith in Place, and the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center to host many of the solar education sessions, called Solar Power Hours, for the program.

“Common Ground is thrilled to be partnering with Solar Urbana-Champaign,” said Mia Hanneken, Education Coordinator at Common Ground Food Co-op. “Hosting monthly Solar Power Hours is the perfect opportunity to educate our community on renewable energy options and supporting a local organization all in one. Common Ground strives to be an earth-friendly business and support other sustainability endeavors in the Urbana-Champaign area.”

“We see the Solar Urbana-Champaign Group Buy effort as part of our mission,” said Cindy Shepherd of Faith In Place. “For twenty years, Faith in Place has worked to educate people

about taking care of what Pope Francis calls 'Our Common Home.' There are several solar houses of worship in our area, and we expect that number to grow."

Andy Robinson not only went solar through the program, he also helped to lead it. "I've thought solar was a cool way to reduce our carbon footprint since I was a kid, but it also needed to make financial sense for our family," said Robinson, who was hired by the MREA to facilitate the Solar Power Hours. "Now we offset nearly all of our electric use and it was a good financial investment."

Urbana's own New Prairie Construction was selected through a competitive process to be the solar installer through the program. New Prairie was the selected installer for the 2017 iteration of the program as well. "New Prairie is extremely happy to be fulfilling the role as contractor for this year's Solar Urbana-Champaign Program," said Julie Birdwell, President of New Prairie Construction. "Solar installations create good blue-collar jobs and are a great opportunity to grow industry in our area. We know solar is a great way to save money on your utilities, but many folks do not. These educational programs and group-buys are a great way to close this information gap, and save even more money for residents of our community."

The program is administered by the MREA at no cost to the Cities or Counties. MREA has successfully implemented similar programs in other jurisdictions in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Solarize programs have taken place all over the country, from California to Maine.

The MREA was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit shortly after the first [Energy Fair](#) in 1990. MREA's mission is to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration. To learn more, call [715-592-6595](tel:715-592-6595) or visit www.midwestrenew.org.

###