



The Power to Make a Difference!
Newsletter
Autumn 2016



Community Solar for Community Action: Project kicks off at Leech Lake!

RREAL breaks ground on nation's only 100% low-income community solar array integrated with energy assistance. Before the snow flies, we are deploying the first 40 kW of this pioneering approach in Prescott in the Leech Lake Community.

RREAL has designed Community Solar for Community Action, or "CS4CA" as a replicable model that can be readily integrated into the existing nation-wide Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program network, serving 96% of counties in the United States. It is our goal that this model can one day be integrated into federal energy assistance, making solar accessible to millions of low-income Americans!

Community Solar installations are centrally-located solar electric arrays, which provide opportunities for utility rate-payers of any income level to invest in solar

Your Gift is a Catalyst

Support RREAL
on Give to the Max Day 2016 to
catalyze solutions
to energy poverty!



[Donate](#)



Now Hiring new PV Project Manager

REAL Solar is seeking an
experienced and qualified
Solar Project Manager!

energy by purchasing shares and the owning the rights to the energy production of a larger solar electric array sited elsewhere.

Families connecting to our CS4CA pilot project at Leech Lake will see benefits from the new solar array directly, helping to relieve the burden of energy poverty in an innovative, long-term manner. CS4CA will break down barriers, creating the potential for more people to participate in the renewable economy!

Solar Assistance: Fighting Energy Poverty with Solar Power! The Power to Make a Difference

Western Community Action Gets PV for Affordable Housing

RREAL's crew worked in partnership with [Western Community Action](#) this September to install a 4.5kW PV Solar Assistance array on an affordable housing apartment. Western Community Action, located in Marshall, MN, provides essential programs to low-income families and communities, including providing housing and energy assistance. All three families residing in the triplex will benefit from the solar installation. This building, a project of the WCA, is also slated to be weatherized with air sealing, insulation, and health and safety measures. Energy efficiency + solar = savings to families and fewer emissions.



WIRED Magazine Covers RREAL's Solar Assistance Program

RREAL is thrilled to be recognized in a special November issue of WIRED magazine, guest edited by President Barack Obama. Journalist Gregory Barber calls RREAL a "shining example" of an organization finding new ways to bring solar to low-income families. This article, ["Three Ways to Bring Solar Power to the People Who Need it Most"](#) profiles innovative low-income solar programs in three states, concluding with RREAL's Solar Assistance program right here in Minnesota! Photography by Cait Oppermann celebrates RREAL's Solar Assistance work bringing our very own Solstis Solar Powered Furnaces to the White Earth and Leech Lake Reservations.

Project PV for Phebe Draws Support from Far and Near

RREAL is embarking on its first international Solar Assistance project, PV for Phebe, which will bring a solar electric system to Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing in rural Liberia. Phebe treats 30,000 patients and trains 250 nursing students each year. This critical institution saw the first case of Ebola in the country.



RREAL and the [Women of the ELCA](#) have been fundraising tirelessly for PV for Phebe, and the wonderful local community has generously stepped up to support our efforts! RREAL's September fundraiser, "Local Food, Local Beer, Local Energy Far and Near" grossed around \$16,000 for the project! The Women of the ELCA have solicited donations for Phebe in their national publication, Gather Magazine, with an article titled "Solar Power Meets Soul-ar Power" by Linda Post Bushkofsky. They also continue raising funds through fun local events, like the "Let your Light Shine! Empower Phebe Hospital" benefit concert at Prince of Peace church in Brooklyn Park, featuring Liberian musicians.

We have made a lot of progress, but we still have a ways to go. [Your donation](#) will help make this project a reality!

Construction management experience required, engineering degree preferred. Real Solar is a fast-growing company in the burgeoning solar industry. Real Solar's parent organization, RREAL, provides solar energy systems at no cost to low-income homeowners as a clean, long-term solution to energy poverty. Your work with Real Solar will support this mission to fight poverty using solar power.

Come join our fun and talented team in a fast-paced work environment centered in the beautiful Brainerd Lakes Area, with lots of regional outdoor opportunities. Join a great company with great people, and feel great about your work!

This position has full benefits.

Salary is outstanding but commensurate on experience and credentials. Employee ownership and profit sharing is also a near-term possibility.

If you know someone who might be a good candidate for this position, please [visit our website](#) for more information, and email bj@rreal.org.

Staff News



RREAL Welcomes Brook Ferrian to the Team

RREAL and Real Solar are very excited to welcome Brook Ferrian, who will be working as our new Accountant and Office Manager. When she was a student, Brook was awarded the prestigious "Student of the Year" award from our friends at Central Lakes College. Brook has years of experience in accounting, management, and leadership. We can't wait to get to know her better.

Every donation makes a difference, no matter how small!

REAL Solar Installations

Real Solar Builds First Community Solar Array in North Dakota:

In August, Cass County Electric Cooperative in Fargo, North Dakota, tapped Real Solar to build the first community solar array in the state. Customers of [Cass County Electric](#), a cooperative utility company, will now have the option to subscribe to a community solar program, which will reduce the cost of their energy bills. This massive array comprises 324 PV modules! We have now built the very first community solar array in two states, and we're just getting started



Walker Area Community Center Gets New PV Installation:

In collaboration with with Region Five Development Commission and Minnesota Power, RREAL has installed a 30-kilowatt solar electric system to power the [Walker Area Community Center](#) in Walker, Minnesota.

This grid-tied system will provide more than 30,000 kWh of clean energy every year, at no cost to the center. "My family and I use the community center all the time," said Ryan Burns, a Hackensack resident and father of two. "It is a great place for my kids to learn and grow. I'm glad that the Center is saving money from the solar system. That means they can devote more of their resources to programs!"

The WACC is a nonprofit organization that provides social, athletic, and community-building opportunities to Walker, Leech Lake and the surrounding region.

Additional Projects:

In addition to these high-profile projects, Real Solar's crew has kept busy with installations at Security Bank in Bemidji (pictured right), Cass County Electric Cooperative, and several homes!



Education and Community Outreach (ECO)



Students at Leech Lake Tribal College Hired for Community Solar Installation

RREAL is excited to welcome three talented student interns from the [Leech Lake Tribal College](#) Construction Trades Program, who will be joining our installation crew to work on a low-income solar electric installation near Cass Lake. This install will be the pilot project for Community Solar for Community Action, the new, community-based branch of our

Solar Assistance program. Through Community Solar for Community Action, RREAL hopes to help entire communities overcome energy poverty with a long-term, renewable solution.

The solar industry is growing many times faster than the general labor market. Creating jobs in a growing industry helps ensure economic development and



Thank you to Pat Kline

Pat joined our staff in August of 2015, bringing thirty-five years of experience in accounting as well as twenty-three years of experience in management. Pat has consistently stepped-up to challenges at RREAL, putting in extra hours and taking on the role of helping build our social enterprise, Real Solar. She has kept us paid, invoices rolling out, and also found time to provide warm welcoming and training to new team members. Pat will now be stepping down to enjoy her retirement. Thank you for your contribution to RREAL, Pat! We hope you will come back to visit!

VISTA Service Member joins RREAL's crew

Thanks to the **Initiative Foundation**, our year-long **VSA** is on board!



RREAL is very excited to welcome our new Americorps VISTA, Erica Bjelland! Erica is a recent graduate of Concordia College in Moorhead, with a double-degree in Global Studies and Environmental Studies. She will be serving with us for a full year, doing capacity-building work to expand our low-income community solar efforts. She will be compiling research on community solar policy in states across the country, and mapping our direction toward bringing Solar Assistance accessible to entire low-income communities. Her work will be invaluable in expanding our capacity to make solar energy accessible to more people.

fight energy poverty too! The solar industry must be inclusive and create opportunities for economically disadvantaged communities and communities of color.

Welcome to the team, Polly Aitken, Anthony Fair, and Dave Headbird! And thank you to the [Initiative Foundation](#), for your sponsorship of these internships.

High Tunnel at Concordia Provides Lasting Benefits

It has been a year since RREAL installed a solar air heated high tunnel at [Concordia College](#), named one of the coldest university campuses in North America! RREAL advocates for the use of clean, solar thermal energy to extend the growing season in cold climates, increasing food security. RREAL's systems extend the growing season by 6-to-8 weeks on either side of the deep winter. We checked in with students at the college this fall to see how they are using the tunnel today.



According to student garden interns, the high tunnel has provided many learning opportunities at the college. Garden interns have learned to track solar panel data. They have also developed a data system with soil probes to keep track of soil and air temperatures. Primary school students, and the broader Fargo-Moorhead community have also been able to benefit from the garden during the school year as an experiential learning site. The elementary art education class drew vegetables in the high tunnel, communication arts methods students wrote Haiku poetry, an environmental policy class discussed environmental education, and religion classes have even gone to meditate in the high tunnel!

A majority of the high tunnel veggies have been given to the local Dorothy Day Food Pantry, Great Plains Food Bank, and Churches United as donations. Awesome job, Concordia! Way to be responsibly engaged in renewable energy and local food!

Montessori School of Duluth

Real Solar was proud to install a 7.8kW solar PV array on the roof of the [Montessori School of Duluth](#). Solar panels on schools provide a great opportunity for students to learn about our energy choices. They also save valuable energy dollars that schools can redirect into their classrooms.

As RREAL's director Jason says, "today's youth are making tomorrow's energy choices."



Paws and Claws Rescue & Resort and Parker's Prairie Municipal Swimming Pool

RREAL's ECO program has recently undertaken some very exciting community-building projects. The [City of Parker's Prairie](#) will be turning to the summer sun to heat a new municipal pool! This project features a great match between peak solar resource - summer - and load. This installation will be fully commissioned in December and constructed using Made-in-Minnesota solar thermal water heating equipment. City swimmers will have a solar heated swimming pool to look forward to next spring. Imagine every swimmer learning



Thank you to Roger Garton

Roger began volunteering with RREAL in 2010, and worked his way up through the ranks, using his many talents to build and expand our work at RREAL. The contributions he has made to our RREAL over the years have been enormous. We are very proud of Roger, who has moved on to the utility compliance sector. We know that he will continue to use his skills in his new position in utility compliance.

Related Product Sales



Not everyone is ready for a full residential solar energy system. But everyone can take "Small steps with Solar." RREAL is pleased to hold retail partnerships with Voltaic Systems and Solavore! Voltaic Systems offers solar charging devices, including backpacks, brief cases, and smaller packs and chargers. Solavore offers solar ovens that cook with the sun instead of electricity or fuel. You can support RREAL by purchasing merchandise through us. Visit our [website](#), or call us to find out more, or place an order for one of these great products!

about solar as they frolic in the community pool. RREAL secured a solar thermal rebate from the Dept. of Commerce to support the project. Thanks to our partner [Koegel Plumbing and Heating](#)!

This year, RREAL will also be part of an exciting partnership with [Cass County Economic Development](#), the [Small Business Development Center](#) at Central Lakes College, and Paws and Claws Rescue and Resort. We will be creating a solar-powered animal shelter, a great example of green building. Savings from solar will allow more resources to go to the important programming to make [Paws & Claws](#) an even better haven for pets.

Seeking Manufacturer for Solstis™ Solar Powered Furnace

Since 2000, RREAL, together with a committed and capable community of dealers and partners, has provided hundreds of solar heating systems in MN and across the country.



This year, we are hoping to license our technology to a partner who has the competencies and capacity to bring the product manufacturing and distribution to its next level. Please contact us if you have interest in discussing the licensing opportunity.

For more information, visit our [website](#)!

Each sunny day across the United States, Solstis™ Solar Powered Furnaces produce clean, useful and practical heat. This is a great opportunity for you to partner with RREAL to provide for a clean energy future.

Sunny regards from all of us at RREAL!

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