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Residents form solar cooperative

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By Roger Adkins - Upshur Bureau Chief (radkins@theintermountain.com) , Inter-Mountain

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BUCKHANNON - Residents in Upshur, Tucker and Randolph counties have formed a solar cooperative in hopes of building a community of solar supporters and making it easier to propagate this efficient, self-sustaining form of energy.

An information session will be held at 6 p.m. Nov. 12 at the Upshur County Public Library located at 1150 Route 20 South in Buckhannon.

The group is seeking additional members and is working with West Virginia Solar United Neighborhoods. West Virginia expands access to solar by educating West Virginians about the benefits of distributed solar energy, helping them organize group solar installations and strengthening West Virginia's solar policies and its community of solar supporters. The Upshur, Tucker Randolph Cooperative also is sponsored by the Tucker County Renewables Cooperative.

"This is a great opportunity for folks in the area to learn about solar energy and save some money," said Corey Chase of the Tucker County Renewables Cooperative. "I am excited to watch the group grow."

By going solar together as a group, the cooperative gets a discount through its bulk purchasing power, saving an average of 20 percent compared to the cost of an individual installation.

The cooperative solicits competitive bids from local installers in order to get the most competitive pricing. The group then reviews bids with the help of WV SUN an installer-neutral process. This ensures the cooperative's members get quality systems from experienced contractors, Chase said.

Members each get an individualized proposal for their home that reflects the group discount. Each co-op member can then decide to go solar based upon this individualized proposal. There is no obligation to buy, Chase said.

"Solar is a great way to make our communities more self-sufficient," said Karan Ireland, WV SUN program director. "If you've ever thought about going solar, now is a great opportunity to do so."

April Keating, of Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance, is excited about what this means for Central West Virginia.

"I think a lot of people have wanted to go solar for a long time, but they didn't know how to get started. There are new technologies that make solar more accessible to more people. This information session is a great way to get your questions answered and find out how you can benefit from producing your own power," she said.

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