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NEW SOLAR DEMONSTRATION CENTER “GOES MAIN STREET” ON L.I.

Grand Opening Features Solar Fair on Sunday, Oct. 14

Heralding a new trend in the effort to make solar energy more accessible, on Sunday, Oct. 14, The Solar Center will open a solar information and demonstration center at a storefront in a major retail location, at 1786 East Jericho Turnpike in Dix Hills.

The facility, the first in a series planned on the East Coast, will feature extensive “touchable” solar electric and hot water system components, and will have regular hours five days a week. The educational and community-oriented feel of the place will be more like an Apple store than a traditional sales showroom or retail space.

Weekly solar seminars are planned, as well as regular presentations on wind, geothermal and energy efficiency. Non-profit organizations involved in sustainability issues will be able to use the space for appropriate meetings, and school groups will be welcome. Brochures and other information from non-profit organizations and government agencies will be available. A video about solar energy will be shown regularly.

To celebrate the opening a “Solar Fair,” with technology demonstrations, educational programs, entertainment, kid-friendly activities and refreshments takes place from noon to 5 p.m., also on Oct. 14.

Free solar toys will be given away to children, and the first 50 households participating will receive a certificate for \$1000 off a new solar electric system. Each participant can also enter a raffle for a solar iPod and cell phone charger, a solar backpack and other prizes.

From Oct. 14 on, solar experts will staff the facility. Using Google Earth and computer stations, they will analyze the solar potentials for buildings of interest to visitors. Energy-saving light bulbs, alternate energy and energy efficiency books, solar toys and solar backpacks are among the smaller items available for sale.

The building will be powered by highly visible solar panels on the roof. Sustainable construction materials, including recycled glass tiles and a cork floor, have been used wherever possible.

With the acquisition of Northport-based Sunwave Technologies in May, the opening of The Solar Center’s Dix Hills facility is a major commitment to Long Island, and a return to roots. The Solar Center’s president, Dennis Wilson, grew up in Amityville. He installed the company’s first 15 solar electric systems on Long Island, as well as several hundred solar hot water systems during the 1980s. Wilson has been developing solar thermal, cogeneration, energy efficiency and solar electric projects since the late 1970s.

Initially, hours of The Solar Center in Dix Hills will be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, on Thursdays open to 9 p.m. Most solar show rooms, themselves a rarity in the East Coast, are not in storefronts, do not have regular hours and are only open by appointment. The primary purpose of such facilities is typically as an office or warehouse, and the demonstration facility is merely an adjunct. Few on the East Coast are in major retailing locations, but their number is growing, signifying a new stage in solar's acceptance by the public. The Dix Hills storefront is the first of several such facilities planned by The Solar Center, which intends to raise the bar on this method of encouraging public interest in solar energy.

The Solar Center, with some 50 staff, more than 300 installations and over 500 customers, is the largest solar designer and installer in the tri-state region. The Solar Center serves both the residential and commercial sectors, and installs solar electric and solar hot water systems, and emergency backup power systems. It also provides other energy efficiency solutions and energy management services. In addition to the Dix Hills storefront, the company has offices in Denville and Turnersville N.J. For more information visit www.thesolarcenter.com, or call (888)SOLAR-05.

Solar electric systems directly reduce carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming. They reduce reliance on foreign fossil fuel sources and the weather-related and other vulnerabilities of the electric grid. Scientists widely agree that an hour's worth of sunlight reaching Earth holds more energy than humans worldwide use in a year.

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