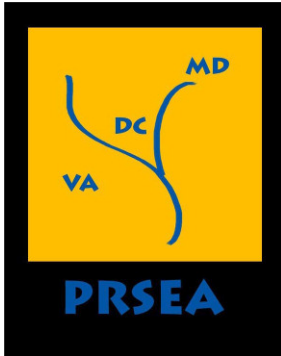


THE PRSEA SUN

Summer 2009

www.prsea.org



Meeting Announcement:

Mark your calendars!!

The next PRSEA meeting will be held on Saturday, July 11th, at 2:30 PM. The meeting location will be the Arlington Central Library Auditorium, 1015 North Quincy St., Arlington, Virginia.

Speaking at the meeting will be Will Stewart, a professional engineer and nationally known expert in passive solar design.

CarbonfreeDC is cosponsoring the meeting with us! See link below for directions and visit the PRSEA website for more information.

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/Libraries/about/LibrariesAboutCentral.aspx>

PRSEA News

The last six months have been a busy time--PRSEA participated in numerous events around the DC area, including the EPA sponsored P3 event on the National Mall, several Green Festivals, and several meetings of local organizations, such as CarbonFreeDC and the Electric Vehicle Association of DC. PRSEA volunteers either made presentations or helped to staff our display tables at these events. As of late May, the "Solar Basics for Homeowners" presentation has been given four times in an effort to "spread the word" about solar energy systems and incentive programs. If you know of a group that might like to hear the presentation, or a venue where we could have a display, please send us an email.

Critical to this very active period has been the work of Jane Hager, PRSEA's first part-time Executive Assistant. Jane completed a three-month contract in mid-May and was instrumental in finding opportunities for PRSEA to participate, and in arranging most of the logistics. She also attended the ASES national Chapters meeting on our behalf and gained a lot of good insight and information that will help in PRSEA's future development. We hope to have the financial resources to continue the EA arrangement in some form—please see the membership renewal notice below for details.

Our webmaster, Willy Williams, recently was able to move the PRSEA webpage to a new webhosting service, enabling access to better tech support as well as some new features. We now have forums available to explore issues and questions about solar energy, energy efficiency, and energy policy! Please register for the forums,

start some threads on your favorite solar topics, and help make this a resource that people will consult on a regular basis. Who knows, maybe we can create some synergy between the general public, the technical types and the activist types to help make sure that solar energy is accorded the attention it deserves.

Hope to see you all at the July meeting!

Jim Crowley—PRSEA Chair

PRSEA Membership Renewals

Joining PRSEA through ASES is probably the most common way that we receive new and continuing members—ASES members receive a subscription to “Solar Today” magazine, and have the option to support local chapter activities. Be sure to check the “chapter membership” box on the ASES renewal form and indicate PRSEA as your chapter affiliation.

Some of you joined PRSEA directly and may not be interested in also maintaining ASES membership (Perhaps you read Solar Today in the library or simply have too many things to read already!) We have been delinquent in reminding you to please renew your PRSEA membership. Until we win the lottery, or find a wealthy benefactor, your membership renewals are the main financial resource that enables our work to continue. Your \$25 membership dues, as well as any additional contributions you may care to make, are fully tax deductible. In addition, any ideas that you may have to make PRSEA stronger and more effective are welcome.

Request for new Board Members

The PRSEA Board has eight positions, each of which has a two-year term. Four positions are currently vacant and need to be filled. Serving on the Board need not involve a large time commitment. We have bi-weekly conference calls that take less than an hour. We have approximately monthly events where help with organization and staffing may be needed. What we really need are Board members with ideas to help move PRSEA forward, and the willingness to help do the necessary work. Recent experience suggests that if we have good ideas we can attract help from the PRSEA membership and from other groups (Sierra Club members helped out at our EPA display; Sustainable Loudoun co-sponsored our last meeting in January). If you are passionate about solar energy and want to be more involved please offer your name as a prospective Board candidate. Despite recent progress in raising general public awareness and acceptance of solar energy we need to stay active. The battle truly is just beginning!

Kill-a-Watt Campaign

As many of you know, PRSEA purchased a shipment of Kill-a-Watt meters at wholesale price, and has been offering them at cost as a membership benefit. These nifty little devices can be used to measure the power consumption of your home appliances and help you to save energy by locating certain energy culprits (such as audio-visual equipment vampire loads). If you joined PRSEA through ASES and would like a Kill-a-Watt meter, simply send us a check for \$22 (covers the Kill-a-Watt plus mail costs). New or renewing members can purchase one additional Kill-a-Watt meter (i.e. two meters total). The cost for the second meter is \$20 if we hand it to you in person; \$22 if we have to mail it. (See our website for Kill-a-Watt related downloads).

Solar Muse

Going back to Grandma's house -by Jim Crowley

Amid all the worries about the economy, energy shortages, peak oil, and other matters, it is worth remembering that Americans in the past have lived well on far less energy than we consume today.

I remember my Grandmother's house, which did not have electricity until the 1940's or plumbing until the 1970's. Don't get me wrong. I am not advocating a return to those times. However, older folks used well-proven techniques when constructing and operating their homes that gave them better comfort. We can learn some things from them.

Grandma's house had a big front porch and was surrounded by shady trees on all sides. There were many windows on the south and east sides of the house but only a few on the west and north sides. The roof was metal, and was painted a reflective silver color. Every room in the house had cross ventilation and it was rare in summer for the interior to be uncomfortably warm. In the "dog days" of August, one could sit by the fan (after there was electricity). In addition, there was a summer kitchen, basically a screened-in back porch where a second stove was used for summertime cooking. This helped keep the interior of the house cooler. During winter, the big woodstove in the main kitchen served a dual purpose—for cooking and for keeping the house toasty warm.

Food came from the garden, of course, picked fresh during the summer, and stashed away in the cellar each fall. On Saturdays, my folks drove to the town three miles away to buy sugar, flour, milk (after they sold their dairy cow), and various other items that they could not make for themselves. In winter they could be stuck for days after a big snowstorm. No matter. Hot water could be heated on the woodstove. Grandma also knew how to put on a sweater and there were no pipes to freeze! They did not have it easy. But neither did they complain about any major discomfort. Indeed, when electricity came it brought mainly convenience—first there was a radio and a refrigerator, lights to read by at night, and later the option to watch television (only one channel).

It is unfortunate that so many of our newer homes have been constructed without giving consideration to basic design features that promote energy efficiency. I see a lot of houses on tree-less lots, designed without roof overhangs, and with most of the windows oriented to the north and west. Many houses are oversized and totally dependent on continuous energy inputs to be habitable. Take that energy away for even a few hours or days, and then...what? The vast majority of modern houses even use electricity or natural gas to heat water during the summer when there is plenty of free solar energy waiting to be tapped! Grandma did not have super insulation, high-tech windows, or ground source heat pumps. What she did have was a frugal nature, a lot of useful know-how, and good old common sense. Besides technology, we need all of the above if we are to create a more sustainable society.

To join, mail this form with your annual dues to:

Potomac Region Solar Energy Association (PRSEA)
attn: PRSEA Membership
P.O. Box 809
Pasadena, MD 21123-0809

**I would like to join the
Potomac Region Solar Energy Association.**

Enclosed is my check for one year annual dues:
(please check appropriate member category below)

____ Student (\$10.00); ____ Educator (\$15.00);
____ Individual (\$25.00); ____ Individual + Kill-a-Watt meter (\$45.00)

Please send correspondence to my ____ Home ____ Business address (please check one).

Name: _____ Title: _____

Occupation: _____

Business Name (if applicable)

Work Address:

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Home Address:

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Primary areas of interest (include additional sheet if necessary): _____

Member of American Solar Energy Society (ASES) _____ Yes _____ No.