

Home Solar Power System Donated to Local Veteran

Contributed Photos



Homeowner Brian Haas and his service dog, Buddy.

Local veteran Brian Haas celebrated the installation of a rooftop solar system on his new home that will save him and his wife \$1,000 each year on their electricity bills. The work was done last Wednesday, September 21 by local volunteers and veteran job trainees led by GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic, an organization that makes solar power and job training accessible to underserved communities. Mr. Haas's home is being built for him by the nonprofit HeroHomes, which works to provide disabled veterans the pride of homeownership.

Brian Haas joined the Army in 1996, fulfilling his dream of becoming a helicopter pilot. Over the next seven years, Brian acquired over 1,550 hours of combat flight time, and over 2,500 hours total, earning his Master Wings. In 2013, due to a hard

landing, Brian suffered a severe back injury. Eventually, Brian Haas was relocated to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where he has lived the past two-and-a-half years.

"HeroHomes is excited to partner with Grid Alternatives to install leading edge solar technology to produce a clean, renewable energy efficient home for a disabled veteran and his family in Purcellville. This partnership is especially important to HeroHomes as we continue to research and implement technologies and best practices for green building," said Scott Gessay of HeroHomes. HeroHomes was formed last year, receiving its 501(c)3 designation in October 2015. HeroHomes was established

to build houses for those who have fought for the preservation of freedom and democracy for others. These deserving vets and their families cannot regain what they lost defending our country, but HeroHomes gives them a new start in building a solid foundation for their future and the dignity of an independent life in a wonderful small town community setting.

The solar installation on the Haas home is part of GRID Alternatives' national Troops to Solar initiative, a job training program supported by the Wells Fargo Foundation that will provide hands-on training and job connections to over 1,000 U.S. military veterans and active service members across the country. While the veterans learn and

solar resume bank to help connect veteran trainees with companies that are hiring. This solar installation trained sailors from the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD), as well as other active duty military.

"Our first Troops to Solar build is a great example of how GRID's mission serves everyone; we are providing job training to veterans and active duty military to help them make a smooth transition from one career to another. We are happy to install solar in Virginia, and look forward to seeing where our partnership-providing deserving veterans housing with HeroHomes takes us!" said Nicole Steele, Executive Director of GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic.

The equipment, system design and engineering for today's installation was generously donated by Standard Solar, a national leader in the full-service development, installation and financing of solar electric systems based in Rockville, MD. "When we were approached and asked to donate the materials and design services for a solar install on a Hero Homes home, we jumped at the chance," said Scott Wiater, president & CEO of Standard Solar. "As a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, veterans' issues — and organizations like Hero Homes — are particularly near to my heart. To give Brian an opportunity to benefit from the cost savings of a solar energy system gives me — and our company — a great deal of pride and satisfaction."

Speakers included Nicole Steele of GRID Alternatives, Scott Wiater of Standard Solar, Jason Brownell of HeroHomes, homeowner Brian Haas, Mayor of Purcellville Kwasi Fraser, and Director of Outreach for Congresswoman Comstock, Dave Stegmaier. After the speaking event, everyone enjoyed a lunch generously donated by local restaurant in Leesburg, Travinia Italian Kitchen & Wine Bar.



Kwasi Fraser, Mayor of Purcellville, on the roof with Chris Bledsoe, Town of Purcellville Council Member, and GRID Alternatives staff

apply their skills, they also help families in need, including other veterans like Mr. Haas, live more affordably in their homes. Through this national initiative, GRID Alternatives leverages its partnerships across the solar industry and its national

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Speakers from the event. From left to right: Dave Stegmaier, Director of Outreach for Congresswoman Comstock; Jason Brownell, HeroHomes; Nicole Steele, GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic; Brian Haas, Homeowner; Bob Lazaro, former Mayor of Purcellville; Scott Wiater, Standard Solar; and Kwasi Fraser, current Mayor of Purcellville

Discussion to Build Relationships with Authorities

The Community Engagement Coalition, a community focused organization based in Loudoun County, in conjunction with the Loudoun NAACP Legal Redress Committee will be hosting a town hall discussion on building relationships with local authorities.

This free event will take place at Tuscarora High School on Oct. 5 at 6:30pm, and features panelists from the local law enforcement and criminal justice

community. Confirmed speakers include: Gregory Brown, Michael Chapman, Jim Plowman, Victor Leon Powell and Phyllis Randall.

The focus of the discussion is on bridging the gap between law enforcement and the Loudoun/Leesburg community. Topics of discussion include use of force, gun violence, officer grievance/complaint procedures, community-based policing, and other questions or concerns.