



For immediate release

## **GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic hosts Solar Soirée, honoring local champions of environmental justice, social justice, and workforce diversity**

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.; September 23, 2019** — GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic hosted its Solar Soirée on Sept. 19 in celebration of the organization’s five-year anniversary, honoring local champions of environmental justice, social justice, and workforce diversity a day ahead of the climate strike in Washington.

“We can’t do this work alone. We’re proud to be honoring three members of our community who have championed the causes of social justice, environmental justice, and workforce diversity, because those are the values we hold most dear,” said Nicole Steele, executive director of GRID Mid-Atlantic.

“Our honorees’ work in these areas have made great strides toward lasting solutions and set a course for all of us to follow,” Steele said.

Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali of the National Wildlife Federation, Mary M. Cheh of the D.C. Council, and Andy Shallal, founder and CEO of Busboys and Poets, were honored with GRID Mid-Atlantic’s Environmental Justice Champion, Social Justice Champion, and Workforce Diversity Champion Awards, respectively.

Since it was founded in 2014, GRID Mid-Atlantic has been a leader in making solar energy and solar jobs accessible for low- to moderate-income residents and people of color in D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. To date, GRID Mid-Atlantic has installed 269 solar energy systems in the region, averaging nearly 50 installations per year, at no cost to clients. Those solar energy systems have provided more than 2.2 mW and \$7.2 million in energy savings for low- and moderate-income residents. They’ve also prevented more than 51,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions — an effect that equals 10,000 passenger vehicles being removed from the road for one year.

GRID Mid-Atlantic’s workforce development program has also provided job training to 860 individuals in the D.C. metro area with 20 more beginning training this week. Trainees receive on-the-job training through real installations that directly benefit homeowners and renters within their community. Trainees that complete the curriculum exit with certifications in OSHA 10 and CPR. GRID Mid-Atlantic assists graduates by facilitating job opportunities and connections in the solar industry.

The Solar Soirée highlighted local leaders that demonstrate GRID’s core values of environmental justice, social justice, and workforce diversity. In doing so, they have helped improve access to renewable energy and bridge gaps in opportunities for marginalized communities.

Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali has fought on behalf of environmental justice and economic equity for nearly three decades as a guest lecturer, a 24-year employee at the Environmental Protection Agency, and currently as the Vice President for Environmental Justice, Climate, and Community Revitalization at the National Wildlife Federation. Dr. Ali’s stated

vision “is to uplift our most vulnerable communities by creating authentic collaborative partnerships committed to moving from surviving to thriving.”

As the D.C. Councilmember representing Ward 3 since 2007, Mary M. Cheh has played a major role in the District’s commitment to environmental sustainability. Councilmember Cheh has championed legislation to protect the environment, improve the health of District residents, and has fought for good government. Mary’s signature environmental bill, the Clean and Affordable Energy Act, created a special body to assist residents and businesses to curtail energy use. Cheh also helped bolster the Renewable Energy Portfolio; mandated energy benchmarking of buildings; and fostered the installation of solar energy, green roofs, and alternative energy systems.

Andy Shallal has received numerous awards, including the Mayor’s Arts Award, the Mayor’s Environmental Award, and Employer of the Year from the Employment Justice Center, for his work as the founder and CEO of restaurant group Busboys and Poets. Busboys and Poets is a group of restaurants in the Washington Metropolitan area where art, culture, and politics intentionally collide over mindfully sourced food, drinks, and programming. Busboys and Poets has been at the forefront of environmental stewardship as one of the first businesses in Washington, D.C. to be 100 percent wind-powered and at the cutting edge of the local and sustainable food movement. He has founded and co-founded several peace and justice organizations and holds leadership positions in numerous others.

The Solar Soirée featured live musical performances including steelpan player Josanne Francis, a native of Trinidad & Tobago who has previously played at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, who performed with her trio during the event’s cocktail hour. Local group BFDS, which draws influences from funk, rock, hip-hop, and jazz, performed during the second half of the event, and DJ Ra provided music throughout the show.

GRID Mid-Atlantic would also like to thank sponsors Smoke & Barrel, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Tito’s Handmade Vodka, Whirlpool, Wells Fargo, Washington Nationals, E&E News, Capital Community News, and the Washingtonian.

### **About GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic**

GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic is an affiliate of GRID Alternatives, a national leader in making clean, affordable solar power and solar jobs accessible to low-income communities and communities of color. Using a unique, people-first model, GRID Mid-Atlantic develops and implements solar projects that serve qualifying households and affordable housing providers, while providing hands-on job training. GRID Mid-Atlantic has installed 267 solar systems and helped households and housing providers save \$7.8 million in lifetime electricity costs while training over 860 people. For more information, visit [www.gridalternatives.org/midatlantic](http://www.gridalternatives.org/midatlantic).

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