

SOLAR PANELS LIGHT THE WAY AT PINE POINT IN STONINGTON— School Installs New Energy System, Helps to Reduce Emissions, By Judy Benson, *The Day*, Published on 4/3/2007

Stonington — Despite Monday's overcast skies, the new solar panels atop Pine Point School still absorbed enough of the sun's energy to help power the school's lights and computers and reduce its contribution to the greenhouse gases building up in Earth's atmosphere.

"Even on this dreary day, we're generating electricity — about 11 kilowatts the last time I looked," said Paul Geise, head of the school. "Today we're marking less a milestone and more of a mindset."

The private school, with about 270 preschool through ninth-grade students, celebrated the installation of 330 solar panels on the school roof with a ceremony attended by U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., and U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, among other speakers. The panels are expected to generate about 40 percent of the 208,000 kilowatts of electricity the school uses annually.



Photo by TIM MARTIN/The Day U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., addresses a gathering at Pine Point School in Stonington on Monday during a dedication ceremony for the school's new rooftop solar-power system.

"This really is a beautiful thing you're doing," said Lieberman, addressing his comments to students seated on the ground in front of the podium.



Photo by TIM MARTIN/The Day

U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., left, and U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, take part in a ceremony Monday at Pine Point School in Stonington to dedicate the school's new solar photovoltaic system, which consists of 330 solar panels that will produce 80,000 kilowatt hours of electricity for the school.

Quoting from a list of "quick facts" in the event program, Lieberman noted that because of the solar panels, the school would be responsible for creating 150,616 fewer pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually than if it continued to rely solely on electricity produced by burning fossil fuels. Both he and Courtney said the school serves as a model for the kinds of actions that are needed on the local, state and federal levels to reduce the human contribution to climate change.

"It's time to act," Courtney said.

Also attending the event was John Calandrelli, state director of the Sierra Club. Pine Point, he said, has distinguished itself among Connecticut schools for having the largest renewable energy project to date.

"I don't know of anything larger at a school," he said.

Costing about \$460,000, the panels were installed at no cost to Pine Point by SolarWrights, a renewable energy company based in Bristol, R.I., that has a local office in Stonington. The company retains ownership of the panels and sells the power they generate to Pine Point at an estimated cost savings to the school of about 10 percent.

Under the arrangement, SolarWrights paid for the project with a loan and a \$286,000 grant from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund.

"We're trying to make Pine Point a carbon-neutral school," said Robert Chew, president of SolarWrights. Future projects planned at the school, he said, include the installation of a wind turbine and geothermal power equipment on the school grounds.

For the ceremony, students and staff wore T-shirts with a large, smiling sun on the front and the slogan, "Got solar? Pine Point School Does!" on the back.

"Solar energy is a huge step forward for Pine Point," said Tom Owen, student council president and an eighth-grader at the school. "Thanks to Pine Point for taking a leading role in environmental stewardship."

Energy generation monitors connected to the panels would be used in classroom lessons about renewable energy, even for the school's youngest students.

"Green planet is our theme this year, so this fits in very nicely," said Nicola Newberg, who teaches 3- and 4-year-olds.

After the ceremony concluded with the students singing the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun," Stonington First Selectman Bill Brown stepped forward with a question.

"Do you think the town of Stonington should take this initiative and do what you've done at Pine Point?" he asked, addressing the students.

They answered with a loud chorus of "yes."

"Then we're going to do it," said Brown.