

Alternative energies will get to shine on Oct. 2 *Open houses throughout region*

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Warwick — Those interested in solar, wind, geothermal or other alternative ways to heat, cool or power homes can hear first-hand from the users of these technologies about their pros and cons, without the pressure of a sales pitch.

The annual green building and solar energy tour scheduled for Oct. 2, will feature homes, businesses and farms opened to those interested in installing such systems on their own properties, as well as to those who are merely curious, participants said.

“The tour is more about people getting to learn about alternative energy, rather than buying anything,” said Pat Gallagher, an installer of solar hot water systems.

“Even if you’re not going to do this right away, we want you to understand what’s the best way to use your money when you do,” said Thom Woglom, owner of Greenway Technologies, which plans to participate in the tour by demonstrating a solar thermal system installed by Gallagher, as well as offer presentations on solar electric systems and other energy efficiency measures during the one-day event.

Woglom’s office is at 585 State Route 94 in Warwick.

Organized by the American Solar Energy Society and the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, the tour included 500 companies and homeowners from throughout the Northeast in 2009 and is expected to have as many or more homeowners giving tours this year.

The exact number of homeowners participating in the Hudson Valley was uncertain Wednesday.

Those interested in finding an open house near their communities can conduct online searches on the associations’ Websites.

In Sullivan County, visitors can tour the farm of Dick Riseling, who owns an 85-acre farm in Callicoon Center. Riseling will be offering tours of his 10 kilowatt wind turbine, 7.5 kilowatt photovoltaic system, as well as a solar thermal and radiant heating system at his farm and guest house from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

“If it’s not sustainable, that means it can’t last, and if it can’t last, it will end, and end catastrophically,” said Riseling, who speaks enthusiastically about both the philosophical reasons behind the need for a shift to renewable energy and the cost savings and state and federal tax incentives that make these systems affordable.

In Ulster County, people can visit possibly the only existing net-zero neighborhood going up on Cooper Street in New Paltz. Being built by Anthony Aebi, the 25-lot subdivision will be showcasing two homes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., both of which use solar electric, geothermal, triple-pane windows, heat-recovery systems and insulated concrete forms. “All these things work together to produce zero-net energy,” said Wendie Reid, the realtor selling the homes.

Those promoting the tour say it opens people’s eyes to the realities of complete energy independence for the average person, an idea once considered radical to the average homeowner.

“We can transition from a petrol-fueled world to one that is clean, safe and prosperous,” Riseling said. “We have the tools. We simply don’t have the will, and that comes from education and advocacy, which is what this tour is all about.”

To find an open house near you, visit nesea.org or nationalsolartour.org

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Patrick Gallagher of Gallagher Solar Thermal checks out a solar hot water heater at Greenway Technologies on Tuesday. Both Warwick businesses will participate in an alternative-energy tour Oct. 2.

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