



Acorn Energy Co-op e-News

Issue No. 39

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Member Owned
Renewable Energy Products and Services

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Dear ,

This is the 39th edition of the Acorn Energy Co-op's e-Newsletter, published periodically to keep you apprised of happenings in the Co-op and informed of upcoming events.

See below for news about:

- Recent Member Survey
- Vermont Wood Pellet Update
- InSite Potluck
- REV Conference Report
- Lifetime Member Irene Barna

Finally, we encourage you to visit our website frequently at www.acornenergycoop.com to access the wealth of information about energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other money-saving strategies available there.

Please pass this e-Newsletter along to friends, neighbors and family who may not be aware of the Co-op and its activities and plans.

Thank you for your ongoing support,

The Acorn Energy Co-op Team



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Member Survey Results

In order to get a better sense of how we're doing, we recently sent out a survey to our members. We received responses from 43 (a 19% response rate), which is a very respectable percentage for any survey. We'd like to share a few highlights from those responses.

Regarding [member discounts](#), Vermont Wood Pellets (\$5 off per ton) was used by 49% of the respondents; followed by retail stores, restaurants and other businesses (32%); and the Solar PV discount from Green Earth Energy was used by 16%. Our discounts on Stiebel Eltron solar hot water systems as well as Energy Products and Services discounts each garnered 11%. Some people took advantage of more than one discount category. One person said: "**Just as important was consulting with members knowledgeable about the possibilities to help me decide what to do.**"

We had a number of complaints about the high prices for Vermont Wood Pellets (VWP). We sympathize with these comments, but want you to know that we have very little control over pellet pricing, which is largely determined by VWP (the manufacturer) and Vermont Renewable Fuels (the delivery service). We offer a high-quality, locally-produced product (including delivery) that benefits the Vermont economy. But that admittedly comes at a price (please see the article below for more on VWP).

Our educational and social events received high marks, with 67% saying they had attended. "Informative and convivial," "all were well done," "I've enjoyed every program I've been to and learned lots," were typical comments. Tours of energy-efficient homes, and more programs about heat pumps were on several peoples' wish lists.

The responses to **"Have you weatherized your home?" were striking. A remarkable 79% said "yes,"** although the comments revealed that in some cases this is still a work-in-progress. "I need to do a lot more; I have a very old house," "We did a partial job," "We have started with the low-hanging fruit from our evaluation, and will continue as funds allow," were typical responses.

Most of you thought we were doing a good job of communicating with you. 95% said our emails and e-newsletters were "just right," and 92% said the same for our online presence (website/Facebook). Several admitted they were not aware that they could renew their memberships on our [website](#).



One member thanked us for taking the time and effort to send out the survey, and suggested that we do it every year. And we'd like to thank everyone who filled out

the survey; we greatly appreciate it, and value your input!

The board will be examining your thoughts and suggestions over the next few months as we plan our direction for the coming year.

Demand for Vermont Wood Pellets Continues

It's pellet season again, and this year it's been a bit of a roller coaster for the Acorn Energy Co-op. Despite their high price, the popularity of the super-premium, clean burning Vermont Wood Pellets continues to put pressure on the mill in North Clarendon. Their unplanned shutdown over the summer has created a tight supply for all dealers this fall, the Co-op included.

We would like to thank all of our customers for their patience and flexibility with last-minute schedule changes and uncertainty. We even had customers who postponed their own deliveries so that other customers



could get their pellets sooner. Your graciousness is much appreciated and makes managing a tricky schedule that much easier.

The 240 tons we have been allocated for this season are **nearly sold out**. We have several tons still available for pick up or delivery in January and February, so if you haven't already reserved tons for later in the season and you think you might need them, please order as soon as possible. We will again be stocking a box outside the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op this winter with individual 40-lb bags for those customers needing smaller quantities.

In addition, our bulk deliveries have been delayed due to mechanical problems with the bulk delivery truck. Chip at Vermont Renewable Fuels reports that the truck is finally up and running and deliveries will resume next week. Thank goodness for the mild fall!

If you have any questions about ordering wood pellets, please contact Gwen at 385-1911 or info@acornenergycoop.com.

InSite Potluck

On Wednesday evening, October 1, we met at the 2013



Middlebury College Solar Decathlon House, [InSite](#), located on Shannon Street in Middlebury, for a potluck gathering. Approximately 25 Acorn Energy Co-op members and members of the board along with the Middlebury College students who are currently living there enjoyed a

delicious meal and lively conversation.

The students, Ellen Kerschner and Rosalie Wright-Lapin, gave a brief presentation about the house and answered numerous questions about its construction and innovative features. Energy Co-op board member, Andrea Murray, who was a faculty advisor for the InSite project, also spoke briefly. Some of the participants also took advantage of the opportunity to discuss individual energy efficiency and renewable energy questions with other members or board members.



The gathering was informative and fun, and we thank Ellen and Rosalie for graciously hosting the evening, and everyone who attended for the delicious food they brought to share.

REV Conference 2014

Three Co-op directors, Rich Carpenter, Peter Carothers, and

Dick Thodal, attended the annual Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) conference in October. Here are a few of their reflections:

The entire mood of the conference was upbeat, starting with the Keynote Speaker, David Hochschild from the California Energy Commission. California leads the nation (as well as much of the world) in solar generation, both from the standpoints of cutting edge technology and large deployments of projects amounting to many Megawatts of capacity. Hochschild complimented Vermont for its forward leaning policies and incentives for renewable energy developers.



At one workshop we learned that **renewable energy jobs in Vermont are growing** at an annual rate of 12%. The demand for community solar projects is strong because many homeowners are not able to site projects on their roofs due to shading, orientation, and other barriers, but increasingly they can participate in solar production by joining local projects.

At another session Mary Powell, President of Green Mountain Power, described how GMP is moving into businesses that are not traditionally taken on by utilities. Their new programs help customers adopt technologies that improve energy efficiency and reduce fossil fuel use. One example is promoting the installation of cold climate, air-source heat pumps, which can dramatically reduce heating costs.

At a Net Zero Building workshop, we learned that in a true net zero building, where the total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis is roughly equal to the amount of renewable energy created on the site, efficiency must be the primary concern. This helps to keep the overall size of renewable energy technology, such as PV panels, as small as possible.

A lively forum including state legislators discussed issues ranging from the cap and trade system that has been implemented in Quebec, possible extensions to Vermont's net metering laws, and ways of meeting the state's renewable energy goal of 90% renewables by 2050.

During the REV annual meeting, various committee chairs reported on activities, past and future, in helping to shape legislation enabling net metering; the Vermont Small Business Offering and SUN Exemptions (that allow simplified local financing of Vermont renewable energy projects), solar taxes and energy transmission.

The conference offered all of this and much, much more!

Lifetime Member Irene Barna

Over the past 40 years, Irene Barna has witnessed the effects of climate change here in Vermont. From the recent deluge of Japanese beetles to the increase in the need for air

conditioning to the modern Vermont phenomenon known as rain-on-snow, Irene is passionate about steps she can take to reduce her own carbon footprint.

Intrigued by discussions with fellow Community Choristers and Energy Co-op board members Rich Carpenter and



Irene, right, listens to remarks at the AESO ribbon cutting ceremony.

Peter Carothers, Irene was quick to jump on board back in 2010, when plans for Acorn Energy Solar One (AESO) were taking shape. Because her home is not a suitable site for solar, the decision to become part of the first community solar project in Middlebury was an easy one for Irene. With fifteen other Co-op member-subscribers, she now receives a payment

several times a year representing her share of the power produced by AESO.

Irene has been a regular attendee of many of the Co-op's education programs and relies on the experience and expertise of the board to guide her energy decisions. Though her home was pretty well insulated for a 1970s-era ranch, she has invested in further energy upgrades, such as air sealing and insulation, to keep her heating oil consumption to one tank per winter.

Even more impressive, however, is Irene's resolute commitment to public transportation. **For the past 17 years, Irene has faithfully ridden the ACTR bus** from her Middlebury home to her job at Middlebury College. Not only does this save her money, but it helps reduce the largest contributor to greenhouse gases in Vermont: transportation. She hopes her example might influence those around her to examine their own vehicle use and explore alternatives such as public transportation, ride-sharing and carpooling, or walking!

We thank Irene for her loyal support of the Co-op and for all she's doing to make a difference in our community.

Don't Forget - Join or Renew Online!

It's easy to **join the co-op or renew your membership** online at our [website](#). To join, click on "**Join Today**." To renew, enter your username (your email address) and click on "**Forgot Your Password**" to set up your password.

Upcoming Events

**Button Up Vermont Day of Action
November 1**

Vermonters always "Green Up" in the spring. Let's stop the waste and start an annual tradition of "Buttoning Up" in the fall. Help us make this a fantastic day - a powerful series of concurrent efforts all across Vermont on November 1. For inspiration, information and

ideas on how to contribute, check out the [Button Up Resources page!](#) See the [Button Up Vermont website](#) for details about events happening in your community and links to the video contest.

Designing a Closed Loop Community: Carbon Flow on the Vermont Tech Campus

(Fall Conference of Vermont Environmental Consortium and Vermont Technical College)

Thursday, November 13

Vermont Technical College, Judd Hall, Randolph, VT

This year's fall conference will focus on components of the carbon cycle on Vermont Tech's Randolph Center campus. It will include discussion of Big Bertha, VTC's biodigester, the campus's carbon footprint and food systems, and other renewable and sustainable practices conducted on site. The day's events will include tours of the facility and VTC's future visions for building more carbon conscious communities. For more information, [click here](#).

Some Helpful Links to More Renewable Energy Information

[RENEWABLE ENERGY VERMONT](#)

Visit Renewable Energy Vermont's website for summaries on statewide renewable energy initiatives and incentives and professional training opportunities. REV is comprised of renewable energy companies, institutional and academic partners and concerned citizens of Vermont working to ensure the expansion of renewable energy statewide. Contact REV to locate your local renewable energy professional. REV members are available to speak to schools and civic groups on the many benefits of renewable energy.



[EFFICIENCY VERMONT](#)

Efficiency Vermont provides technical assistance and financial incentives to Vermont households and businesses, to help them reduce their energy costs with energy-efficient equipment and lighting and with energy-efficient approaches to construction and renovation.



For years it focused on improving electrical costs. Several years ago it expanded and helped Vermont launch **Button Up! Vermont** to help homeowners improve the thermal envelope of their buildings for improved heating and cooling. You can go to its website and click on "**Ask the Home Team**" for common sense answers to your building efficiency questions.

In addition, don't miss the current Efficiency Vermont supported deals in your local hardware store on all types of efficient CFL and LED lighting.

Thank you again for your continued support and enthusiasm. Our member-owned co-op continues to grow thanks to people like you. If you have specific questions about the Co-op, please e-mail us at info@acornenergycoop.com or call us at 802-385-1911.

Sincerely,

Greg Pahl, President
Acorn Energy Co-op

