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Abbott's Mill Nature Center Unveils Solar Installation Project

On Tuesday, Oct. 4, a new solar installation project was formally dedicated at Abbott's Mill Nature Center in Milford. The center is operated by the HYPERLINK "<http://www.delawarenaturesociety.org/>" [Delaware Nature Society](http://www.delawarenaturesociety.org/) and owned by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

An existing solar installation at Abbott's was more than 20 years old, in very poor condition and needed replacement, says David Toman, associate director of business finance for Delaware Nature Society and head of the organization's "green team."

He connected with Dale Davis, president of CMI Solar Electric, a Newark, Del.- based electrical company that has installed almost 300 solar projects since 1998. Toman already had been in talks with CMI regarding new solar installations at Ashland Nature Center and Coverdale Farm Preserve. What happened next, says Toman, went far beyond his expectations.

"Dale offered to work with DuPont Photovoltaic Solutions (DuPont) and Motech Solar to contribute and install updated solar panels," he says. "Dale noted that DuPont might be interested in researching the existing panels to better understand how weather and other conditions impact the shelf life of solar panels."

DuPont contributed the inverter and sign for Abbott's new installation; Motech Solar donated the solar modules and solar cells; and CMI donated the racking, balance of system components and all labor.

DuPont initiated an analysis of the previous modules from the nature center in order to gain insight that may contribute to extending the lifetime of future modules, according to Eric Romano, strategic marketing manager for DuPont Photovoltaic Solutions. HYPERLINK "http://www2.dupont.com/Photovoltaics/en_US/index.html" [DuPont Photovoltaic Solutions](http://www2.dupont.com/Photovoltaics/en_US/index.html) is a leading supplier of materials designed to improve the efficiency, lifetime and overall cost of solar cells and modules.

"This was a great opportunity for collaboration and we were very pleased to contribute to the Delaware Nature Society project," said Romano. "We have a keen interest in the

quality, durability and reliability of solar panels. Knowing why the performance of the older modules might have decreased over time is critical to understanding how we can use DuPont science to make materials that help new modules last even longer. The longer solar panels last, the better investment they become, and the more opportunity we all have to reduce the world's dependence on fossil fuels."

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The Abbott's Mill Nature Center solar installation provides immediate energy savings. The new 2.4 kW system will produce about 2,600 kilo-watt hours of clean renewable energy annually, according to Davis. This will prevent the release of more than three tons of greenhouse gas annually.

In addition, the solar installation plays an important educational role. "Abbott's Mill Nature Center has a long history of renewable energy use, dating back to 1795, when the first mill was constructed on site," says Jason Beale, manager of the center. "We educate all of our visitors about the ways that the Delaware Nature Society uses renewable energy, with a special emphasis on school programs."

The focal point of Abbott's school programs is "Power to the People," a curriculum for grades 6th to 8th that compares and contrasts different sources of energy.

"We appreciate the generosity of DuPont, CMI Solar Electric and Motech Solar," says Mike Riska, executive director of the Delaware Nature Society. "We also want to thank the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs for their partnership in the installation."

"The solar installation at Abbott's Mill is the first step in a solar initiative across our organization," adds Riska. "Later this fall, solar panels will be installed at Ashland Nature Center and Coverdale Farm Preserve."

Dale Davis worked hard to make the Abbott's Mill solar installation possible at no cost to Delaware Nature Society or to the state Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, but it's clear that he found the project worth all the time and effort.

"Now when people come to Abbot's Mill Nature Center, they see a wonderful example of a modern grid-tied PV system," says Davis. "Plus, a public monitoring link will allow them to see how the system is producing. Soon this system monitoring will be expanded and linked to new arrays at Ashland Nature Center and Coverdale Farm Preserve. This educational monitoring system will allow folks to explore how solar power works, understand how they could benefit from solar, and appreciate the impact that solar electricity has on improving the environment."

"The labor and materials we supplied at Abbott's Mill have a commercial value of \$7,400,"

adds Davis. “But the smiles I see on the faces of everyone whenever we talk about this project are priceless. We are proud to have been part of a project with the power to have a positive impact on how the public views solar.”

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