

Going Solar

By Jim Brumm

CalWest Solar Leads The Way To Energy Savings and a **Greener** Earth



Ed Keith, president of CalWest Solar in Santa Rosa, sees which way the wind is blowing, or in this case, the sun is shining. A general contractor since the mid-seventies, Ed has extensive experience in all aspects of construction, from foundations to electrical.

The construction industry is constantly evolving as styles, tastes, new design and construction discoveries and regulations are put into place. There have been great strides in energy-saving methods of home construction. Double-paned windows, better insulation and a host of environmentally-aware materials have helped drive down energy costs and make homes more “green.”

But what if, instead of just trying to use less electricity, you could make your own? Thus, effectively stopping electricity bills forever? Ed Keith, along with his sons, David Keith, the company’s CFO, and Eric Keith, CalWest’s vice president, can make that a reality for you. The family Keith is part of a clan that claims no less than 10 general contractors among family members; construction is in their blood.

In 2007, realizing that solar power was not only a great idea whose time had come, but the direction in which the construction industry was moving, the Keith’s decided to start CalWest Solar with an

eye to helping homeowners become self-reliant for electricity. They are also motivated by an ethos that solar power is simply, right—right for homeowners, right for the planet, right for the economy.

“We’re trying to save the planet, one home at a time,” said David Keith. “Over the long haul, the financial savings can be huge, but leaving a smaller footprint on the Earth is what is most important to lots of our clients.”

CalWest Solar specializes in grid-tied solar systems, that is, systems that are connected to the existing electrical grid. The panels can be mounted either on a roof surface or ground arrays can be designed to maximize solar exposure. These are low-maintenance systems that can begin generating electricity

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immediately upon installation. There are no storage batteries, nothing to learn to operate. You hook it up and begin saving money.

“I know the green movement in this country is here to stay,” said Ed Keith. “Solar is going to be a big part of everyone’s life in the coming years. It’s very satisfying to install a solar array at a client’s home and then watch their face the first time they see their electrical meter running in reverse. It’s great knowing we can use the sun’s energy to run the entire household and save so much money at the same time.”

A correctly installed solar system relieves the atmosphere as well, to the tune of five tons of CO₂ annually. It’s the equivalent of saving an acre of trees each year. There are still tax credits available for those who choose solar, as well as rebates that can offset the initial installation costs. When a solar system is financed through a home equity loan, the cost becomes partially tax deductible as well. And here’s another perk: the added value of a solar system is tax exempt. That is, the additional value it brings to your home is not counted for purposes of property taxes.

The Keiths, father and sons alike, are determined to provide the best service, the most professional installation and the most cost savings possible to their clients. As solar energy systems gain popularity, costs will go down, but that’s no reason to wait. The money you could save with a solar array at your home while you wait could more than make up the difference.

In the near future, expect to see legislation that requires solar on all new-home or commercial construction. If you are ready to get ahead of the game, save money and the environment at the same time, give the Keiths a call at CalWest Solar.

As Ed Keith said: “The future is here.”

For more information about the cost savings of solar power, contact CalWest Solar at (707)546-2227.



The Keiths prepare the roof of a home for solar panel installation



Installing a solar array can save a homeowner thousands of dollars over the life of the house



Eric Keith installs an inverter