

MTSU sells solar energy for Green Power Switch

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MTSU, Tennessee Valley Authority and Murfreesboro Electric announced a partnership Thursday that will allow the university to sell solar power to TVA.

Generation Partners is the program that TVA has established to buy power sold to them from residents and organizations. The power bought goes into the Green Power Switch program with TVA, according to Jim Keiffer, senior vice president of marketing for TVA.

"Green Power Switch is the program where we sell renewable energy to customers who voluntarily buy it," Keiffer said. "There are about 7,000 customers who voluntarily pay more for their energy to make sure that it's green. That comes from wind, solar and landfill gas."

"What we're doing with the Generation Partners is that we, TVA, are buying some of this renewable energy, and we are putting it as part of our supply that we resell as part of our green power program," Keiffer said.

"We first built our own green sources, then we buy from others that are standalone that are not part of Generation Partners," Keiffer said. "Generation Partners was the third piece that came in. It [gives incentives to] people with the rate we pay, so if they want to go in and put a solar facility in like Dr. Ricketts did, then it works that way."

University officials, along with TVA representatives, credit agribusiness and agriscience professor Cliff Ricketts with organizing the program.

"When we put Generation Partners together, the plan was some of the smaller home owners who wanted to put a solar facility on, we could help them along by buying the power. It worked better from a safety point of view," Keiffer said.

University President Sidney McPhee addressed those gathered. He explained the universities excitement with the program.

"We have developed three major strategic goals for our university, enhancing quality in everything we do in our programs, in the students we recruit, the faculty, our facilities, our staff," McPhee said.

"The second is establishing great partnerships with business and industry and community agencies that will enhance the goals and objectives of this university," McPhee said. "There is no question that this program is a classic example of a meaningful partnership that is a win-win for all concerned, but particularly for the citizens of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County and also for the state, and those customers of Tennessee Valley and Murfreesboro Electric."

"We have a lot of firsts at MTSU, and we are very proud of this institution, and this program indeed is another first. It involves the university selling solar energy power back to TVA," McPhee said. "We'll be selling more energy back to TVA than anyone in the valley. This is possible only because of the good work of Dr. Cliff Ricketts, our professor in agribusiness and agriscience."

"Murfreesboro Electric is proud to be part of the TVA to offer the generation partners project to MTSU," said Mark Kimbell, chief engineer for Murfreesboro Electric Department. "We are excited that through this program, MTSU will be able to further their research with alternative fuel vehicles, and we're proud to be a small part of Dr. Ricketts exciting research."

Ricketts thanked his students for their help with the research he has done over the past 29 years. Then, he spoke about the solar unit that he had put up.

"March 9, 2004, is when we turned this unit on," Ricketts said. "They changed units out two days ago to go digital and electronic with Murfreesboro Electric. But up to two days ago we had produced 17,777 kilowatts of electricity. At 20 cents, that's about a little over \$3,000 if my math is correct."

Ricketts said he meters the amount of electricity he uses, and to this point he has used approximately 1,700 kilowatts for the alternative fuel vehicles he works with.

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