

PRESS RELEASE: ECOBILT ENERGY SYSTEMS



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CHARLESTON, SC – Tapping into the sun’s rays for energy is nothing new. Making solar energy affordable for the average homeowner is still a dream. But if John Griswold of EcoBilt Energy Systems has his way, the dream is about to be realized.

EcoBilt, a Charleston-based company, has donated and is installing a solar thermal system for meeting the hot water heating needs of a new Habitat for Humanity home located in downtown Charleston. “This is the first solar system of any kind to be used on a Habitat for Humanity home in the Charleston area,” says Griswold, president of EcoBilt. “Our goal is to demonstrate that solar energy for heating water can be cost effective in a wide range of dwellings in the Southeast to save money and energy.”

A typical solar thermal system for an average home costs about \$7,000 installed. In South Carolina, federal and state incentives can reduce the cost by as much as 55 percent. An appliance rebate program recently launched by the state of South Carolina provides an additional \$400 for qualified solar thermal units.

“Using solar energy to heat water makes good financial sense to homeowners in addition to reducing dependence on fossil fuels,” explains Griswold.

“Solar energy also gives people a sense of independence. In fact, more and more businesses, industries and even schools are beginning to use solar energy to heat their water because of these benefits.”

The EcoBilt solar thermal system is being installed in a four-bedroom, two bath house Charleston Habitat for Humanity is building for

Stacy Hudson and her three children. The house is expected to be complete this spring and is on track to be Earthcraft certified. Dan Jones, construction manager with the Charleston Habitat for Humanity, commented that the solar thermal system is one of the many things being included in the build, all collectively helping to achieve the Earthcraft designation. Jones explained, “Earthcraft house not only provides Habitat for Humanity with a “roadmap” to build more sustainably, but more importantly, once certification is realized, we know we have a built an energy efficient home – and this means lower operating costs for the family who will eventually live there.”

Up to 85 percent of the Hudson family’s hot water needs will be met by using solar energy to heat water for baths, showers, and washing dishes and clothes. About one third of an average home’s energy bill is for heating water.

The EcoBilt system for the Hudson home is simple, dependable and will last 25-30 years. It uses two 3-by-7-foot AET solar collectors that resemble skylights. Placed on the roof facing south, water is circulated through the solar panels, heated, and, then, stored in a 60 gallon stainless steel storage tank inside the home. The solar water tank looks like a conventional water heater and contains a single heating element as a backup.

With the EcoBilt system, water is heated directly by the sun and does not involve generation of electricity with photovoltaic panels.

“Harnessing the sun’s energy to heat water with current technology is a highly efficient process,” says Griswold. “Anyone who has felt warm water coming from a sun-drenched water hose can begin to understand this solar-heating effect.”

