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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy Efficiency Awareness Across The Grand Strand Three Professional Companies That Are Ready To Assist With All Of Your Needs

by Susan Roush

With the uptick in building over the last few years, the awareness of building energy efficient homes and utilizing energy efficient products is at an all time high.

Two years ago the Solar Energy Industries Association estimated that there were 1.3 million solar installations across the US. The total capacity in 2016 was over 40 gigawatts – enough to power 6.5 million households. South Carolina is among the emerging states with regard to the growth in residential use of solar energy.

Myrtle Beach is one the fastest growing regions in the US, and with the building boom in new construction and new home growth, it has also become a prime area for solar. As a qualified member of the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) and a Trade Ally of Santee Cooper, Monarch Solar is prepared to deliver the benefits of solar energy for homebuyers and homebuilders in the Grand Strand.

Installing solar panels during the home-construction phase is most logical because there is higher efficiency in the solar system



installation, minimal disruption to the homeowners' life, and the possibility of built-in financing through the mortgage. Solar systems are relatively easy improvements that can add 10% to the value of a home and help create a more efficient living space. After completion of solar installation, homeowners will have control of their electricity production and see reduced utility bills.

Rob Clemons, general manager for **Monarch Solar** explained, "We are not just an installer. We offer a turnkey solution working with our customers from beginning to end. We offer a free consultation, survey the site, inspect the roof,



Monarch Solar general manager, Rob Clemons.

order materials, do the paperwork, pull permits and coordinate inspections." After installation, Monarch Solar runs an internal quality control to ensure proper installation and operation.

An in-office monitoring system alerts Monarch Solar to low-production panels so they can rectify the situation. A drop in productivity from one panel will not affect the others. Solar panels are extraordinarily durable. The system is designed to withstand 145mph winds. A baseball thrown from a pitching machine will not break a solar panel. Systems are based upon proven technologies and backed by major companies with long-term warranties. Given the life span of solar panels, one wants to

start with a roof that is in excellent repair. Monarch Solar is in the ideal situation to offer roofing/solar packages that benefit the customer.

Incentives to go solar include a 30% Federal tax credit, a 25% tax credit in South Carolina, and local utility company rebates. Monarch Solar has a relationship with a bank that has a "fantastic solar loan program," said George Schiessl, Solar Sales Executive. "For 18 months there is no payment, no interest and no money down, which allows time to get the tax credit reimbursement to pay the loan."

(Continued on page 14)

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Business owners also have a great incentive to add solar energy systems to their buildings. In addition to the tax credits and utility company incentives, business owners may also qualify for a grant of 25% of the system cost provided by a government program for energy efficiency.



With the recent government tax credits, solar has become more attractive in South Carolina. The building industry's participation in Myrtle Beach is essential to increase awareness of the benefits of solar energy. Adding solar technologies in new building designs can provide a significant competitive advantage to a builder and add a new source of revenue through the sale of solar as a renewable technology.

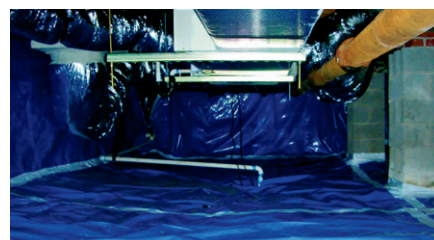
Carolina Cool, a local leader in Mechanical services, and cutting edge technology, takes a refreshing approach to home energy efficiency that blends common sense with kilowatt savings.



Carolina Cool owner, Verlon Wulf.

President Verlon Wulf said, "We are concentrating on home performance, not just changing out boxes. It doesn't really make sense to spend the money to put in new lighting, high efficiency HVAC, or expensive solar, if your home isn't prepared for it. First and foremost we have to make sure the home envelope is sealed, the ductwork and insulation is right, and basics of the entire home are sound."

A BPI analysis helps consumers prioritize which energy-savings steps to take first. Verlon explained, "One thing we do is called the blower



Carolina Cool is BPI certified (Building Performance Institute) to do home analysis using approved industry standards.

door test." This test creates negative pressure in the interior environment, which allows the technician to find all the areas of leakage, and address the biggest sources first. Carolina Cool also installs solar, and because of their focus on overall home performance, giving proper attention to attic insulation and other factors that would be counter-productive to installing high-tech solar panels is critical.

When analyzing a home or office, Carolina Cool also explores and educates regarding advancements in controls and automation. Wifi stats have become common place, with the ability



Carolina Cool performs the blower door test which allows the technician to find any areas of leakage.

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to adjust temperatures and humidity remotely. And owners are becoming increasingly aware of the ability to control lighting, and monitor sprinkler systems, garage doors, locks, security, and shut water on and off.

Other advances in efficiency technology have occurred with mini split systems called variable refrigerant volume (VRV) as an alternative to central HVAC systems. Verlon said, "It really makes the efficiency soar." A mini split consists of an outside unit and refrigerant piping that comes into a cassette or head on the wall, or into a very small air handler. There is no ductwork. Carolina Cool recently retrofitted their new offices. The system actually searches how many BTUs are necessary, and the compressor only pushes as much refrigerant as needed; it is quiet and controls humidity. For new home construction, VRV is not that common yet in the US, but Verlon thinks this will change in the near future. Business, property management companies, and homeowners can look to Carolina Cool for all their mechanical system and service needs. Besides providing energy efficiency analysis, they also provide HVAC, Electrical, and Plumbing services, and solar evaluation and installation.

Palmetto Patio and Hearth partners John Gaddy and Stevie Bryant have nearly 50 years combined gas experience in sales and servicing the needs of the Grand Strand area. John said, "We have an advantage for homeowners and contractors, because when we arrive at a location, we can connect the power, water, and gas as we are licensed in all three fields, and can complete the job from start to finish."



John Gaddy (Black Jacket - middle left) & Stevie Bryant (Black Jacket - middle right) with the Palmetto Patio & Hearth / Palmetto Propane team in front of their office in Conway.

Consumers have several manufacturers to choose from for a tankless water heater though John and Stevie are Rinnai dealers. John stated, "We've been installing and repairing tankless water heaters for 16 years and have had the best experience with Rinnai." Rinnai heaters are designed to last 25 years if installed and maintained properly. Rinnai recommends service and flushing annually to supply years of hot water. Palmetto Patio and Hearth is equipped to help you with these needs.



Palmetto Patio & Hearth / Palmetto Propane owners, John Gaddy (2nd from right) & Stevie Bryant (far right) discuss the plans to bury a propane tank for a recent project.

The upfront cost on a tankless water heater is a little more than a tank-style heater, but the tankless units are designed to last longer and reduce monthly power consumption by 25 to 30% in most areas. Tankless water heaters heat water on demand and provide an endless supply of hot water.

For areas without access to natural gas, Palmetto Patio and Hearth's sister company, Palmetto Propane, Inc. can provide customers with a propane tank to accommodate their needs, whether they lease or purchase a tank. John said, "We strive to offer our customers competitive prices, and look forward to providing them many years of continued service." Palmetto Patio and Hearth also offers



John Gaddy & sales representative, Amanda Cole, in the Palmetto Patio & Hearth showroom located @ 406 Beaty St. in Conway, SC.

residential and commercial gas piping for new and existing applications.

Palmetto Patio and Hearth has a showroom in downtown Conway that offers customers a display of tankless water heaters, gas logs, gas and charcoal grills, cast iron stoves, fire pits, gas lamps, and patio furniture. ■

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