

## Willits has first solar installation under state program

Published in *The Willits News*. Reprinted here with permission.  
By Linda Williams/TWN Staff Writer  
Posted: 06/04/2010



Solar recipients, Brett Baker and his son listen to comments made by Congressman Mike Thompson at system start-up.

A Willits home received the first solar installation under a California Department of Community Services and Development grant aimed at providing rooftop solar systems on low-income homes. Workers had just finished last-minute details Tuesday at the Poplar Avenue residence when Congressman Mike Thompson arrived for the system startup.

The program, called Solar For All California, resulted when CSD provided \$14.7 million in seed money and challenged agencies around the state to find ways through partnerships and alliances to innovatively put solar panels on 1,000 rooftops across the state without costing low-income homeowner anything. Another aspect of the project was to train low-income workers to install solar systems.

North Coast Energy Services received a \$3.3 million grant from CSD to install 150 systems in Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, Sonoma and Yolo counties. NCES agreed to partner with various utility companies, workforce investment boards, solar educators and others, adding an additional \$4.2 million in goods and services for the project at no cost to the state.

The rooftop systems are 3.5 kw in size and will supply the power requirements for a typical home, while reducing greenhouse emissions by about 13,000 pounds per year.

NCES is working with two Mendocino County solar suppliers, GAIA Energy Services in Willits and Real Goods Solar in Hopland, to perform the work. The California Indian Manpower Consortium and the Mendocino Private Industry Council are providing some of the funds needed for GAIA and Real Goods to train nine dislocated workers to install the systems.

All the systems are to be completed within 18 months; CSD will evaluate the different approaches used around the state to determine which approaches were most effective and look for ways to expand the program.

Homeowner Brett Baker applied for the program and had a system installed with no loans, no liens and no out-of-pocket costs.