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SMART VENTURES



Allan Fliss (left), executive director of the New Jersey Green Association, Denville, with Alan Cowe, president of bysolar, inc., Denville.

NJ Green Association Seeks to Unify and Educate

>>> *Just over one-year old, new organization is making environmental inroads.*

By Anthony Birritteri

Allan Fliss founded the New Jersey Green Association (NJGA) last year in an effort to unify the numerous renewable energy firms in the state. "This is a burgeoning industry, but after conducting research, we found there was no real representation of green companies in New Jersey; no horizontal organization where green companies could get together, learn from each other, network and help the industry grow," says the former president of the R&D Council of New Jersey and long-time public relations executive who now heads Nalla-comm Marketing and Communications.

Today, Denville-based NJGA has more than 40 members, most of whom are young entrepreneurs from renewable energy companies. However, membership also includes a financial company, an accounting firm, a law firm, two institutions of higher education and a web design firm. "It's green

companies and the service firms that support them," Fliss says of NJGA's membership.

Education is another important way the association helps its members. Through bi-monthly meetings and seminars (mostly held at Fairleigh Dickinson University), plus webinars, members are updated on environmental news and hear from experts in the field.

This past year, for example, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin spoke at a meeting to discuss the direction the agency is taking. Fliss comments, "Commissioner Martin told us about the problems and the future

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direction of the DEP. They recognize the need for change and are educating the public and private sectors about what they are doing."

Earlier this year, Alan Cowe, president of bysolar, inc., Denville, discussed the cost of investing in commercial and residential solar systems, touching upon the available federal and state incentives.

Cowe says New Jersey is a progressive state when it comes to implementing solar energy systems. The reasons for this, he explains, is the result of the New Jersey Clean Energy Program's initial solar rebate program and, now, the solar renewable energy credit (SREC) program.

He says SRECs, in which an entity with a solar system can sell a credit (based on the generation of 1 megawatt of electricity) to a utility company so that the utility can satisfy its Renewable Portfolio Standards requirement, are now trading at between \$400 and \$650. "A large company with a 500-kilowatt solar system that can generate 560 SRECs can realize between \$300,000 and \$400,000 a year in income," he says.

The numbers seem to work to one's advantage, but Fliss stresses, "New Jersey still needs to educate people on solar and other forms of renewable energy. The state has spent considerable amounts of money telling people they should play the lottery, and has done a wonderful job in telling people, 'New Jersey and You are Perfect Together.' Now we have to do similar things with renewable energy; how it affects people, what we all can be doing and why we should be doing it."