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Breaking News Bristol police looking for two missing teens

Plymouth schools ready for solar power

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Mike Orazzi

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by [Susan Corica](#)

PLYMOUTH — Town officials and representatives from two renewable energy companies flipped a giant switch Tuesday morning to symbolically turn on solar power for the four public schools.

The ceremony took place at the photovoltaic solar panel field next to Terryville High School. The panels have actually been active since the beginning of April, and panels on the roofs of Eli Terry Jr. Middle School, and Fisher and

Plymouth Center elementary schools have been active for months.

Mayor David Merchant called the ceremony “a momentous occasion.”

“Altogether the four solar installations are expected to generate 1.6 million kilowatts of electricity every year and offset approximately 20,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions over their

Solar Power

5/17/2016 Mike Orazzi | Staff Plymouth Mayor Dave Merchant and superintendent of school Marin Semmel along with Andrew Blevin and Con Edison's Michael Perna during a solar power ceremonial flipping of a switch to make Plymouth schools' use of solar power Tuesday morning. Left to right: Blevin, Perna, Merchant and Semmel.

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lifetime,” he said.

“To put this in perspective, that amount of carbon reduction is roughly equivalent to eliminating the consumption of over three million gallons of gasoline or planting more than 620,000 trees,” he said. “It’s amazing when you look at numbers like that.”

Incorporating solar energy into schools is part of a national movement, Merchant said. “The Solar Energy Industry Association says there are more than 3,700 schools right now with solar installations across the country. Together the school systems will save about \$78 million in energy costs every year.”

“Those savings are enough to buy 155,000 tablet computers or cover the costs of thousands of teachers’ salaries,” he said.

Merchant said having a solar facility so close to the high school gives students a chance to see science concepts in action as sunlight is converted to electricity and to use math to calculate energy savings costs.

“We’re showing our children that when society faces challenges and problems we can come up with creative solutions,” he added. “And just maybe this will lead someday to some young student here in Plymouth tackling and solving a global problem.”

Andrew Blevin, from New York City-based Safari Energy, said his company designed and built all four of the schools’ solar projects.

The panels are owned and operated by ConEdison Solutions (CES) and Safari will provide maintenance. The school district will achieve “significant” financial and environmental benefits, with no installation costs, he said.

“Solar energy is a great match for our schools in so many ways,” said Michael Perna, vice president of marketing and business development for CES, which is based in Valhalla, NY.

“Solar power saves money for the schools by lowering the utility bills from what they would have paid if they had purchased standard electricity from the grid,” he said.

Young people can see what sustainability means in practice, Perna said. “The Solar Energy Industry Association, together with the Solar Foundation, issued a report card in late 2014 where they looked at the use of solar energy among schools in the various states.”

“The report card showed something very positive,” he said. “Connecticut ranked very well among the states. When it comes to the number of schools that have photovoltaic installations they counted 95 in the Nutmeg State at the time of that report, which made Connecticut number 11 among the 50 states. That’s a pretty good position to be in.”

“Today we can proudly add Plymouth public schools to that list,” Perna added.

A subsidiary of Consolidated Edison Inc., CES is an energy services company that provides competitive electricity and natural gas supply, renewable energy, sustainability services, cost-effective energy efficiency solutions, and energy performance contracting. The company serves commercial, industrial, residential and government customers, including universities, public school districts, and hospitals nationwide.

For more information, call 1-888-210-8899 or visit www.conedsolutions.com.

Founded in 2008, Safari Energy is a distributed generation focused solar developer, builder and financier. The company has over 70MW of projects built and under construction in markets from New York to Hawaii.

For more information, visit www.safarienergy.com.

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