Solar United Neighbors

2021 Annual Report

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS

Table of Contents

A letter from the Executive Director

This was a transformational year for Solar United Neighbors. We started more than a dozen years ago as a rag-tag group of community members who wanted solar on their homes. In the early years, people had a hard time understanding why we distributed solar energy. They'd ask: Why rooftop and community-based solar? Why not have utilities build it out in the countryside somewhere and rate base it all? Isn't that more efficient?

This year, we made a conceptual breakthrough. We showed how the combination of local economic development, clean energy transformation, and energy equity leads people to an equitable energy system with rooftop solar at its cornerstone. It is clean energy plus local jobs, plus local resilience, plus local cost savings, plus energy independence that makes local community and rooftop solar such a compelling intervention. This year, people stopped asking us why and started asking us how — and we were ready to tell them.

Let me start with the highlights.

- Surpassed 53 MW of installed solar
- Grew our list of supporters from 177,000 to 316,424 people
- Garnered 350 earned media hits
- Held more than 268 digital and in-person events
- Delivered impressive victories in policy and organizing:
  - Legalizing power purchase agreements in West Virginia
  - Passing a solar rights bill in Texas
  - Forcing Appalachian Power Company to allow more solar in Virginia

We accomplished this through a combination of our high-impact state work, our profound growth, our ever-increasing digital presence for training and events, and perhaps most profoundly, the 30 Million Solar Homes campaign.

The 30 Million Solar Homes campaign has been our largest national effort to date. Through the campaign, thousands upon thousands of solar supporters across the country have demanded their elected officials support local solar energy. More than 300 organizations of all shapes and sizes joined in the effort.

Central to their demand is the fact that local solar makes our energy system more fair. Energy equity is both a moral and tactical imperative.

We shouldn't build a new clean energy system that replicates the economic and racial harm caused by the old one. And, we can't build a new clean energy system without the input and support of all communities. That's why this year we further strengthened our Energy Equity and Inclusion Program. It now has more than 27 projects in the pipeline. We also expanded our work in rural communities.

None of this would have been possible without our supporters. I encourage you to read on. I know you'll be as inspired as I am by the work we've done to help people across the country go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights.

Our impact by the numbers

LIFETIME ENERGY SAVINGS

$36.9M THIS YEAR

$233M all time

KW OF SOLAR INSTALLED

10,073 THIS YEAR

53,702 all time

NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED

188 THIS YEAR

931 all time

FAMILIES THAT WENT SOLAR WITH A CO-OP

1,123 THIS YEAR

6,377 all time

PEOPLE WHO JOINED A SOLAR CO-OP

7,149 THIS YEAR

30,612 all time

Connecting more people to solar than ever before

Through our work, more than 1,100 families across the country went solar this year — the most ever! Cumulatively, we've surpassed 50 MW of solar installed. Behind those numbers are tens of thousands of people we've educated about solar energy and empowered to fight for their solar rights.

LOCAL SOLAR SPENDING GENERATED

$27.3M THIS YEAR

$136.4M all time

LOW- TO MODERATE-INCOME FAMILIES TAKEN SOLAR

34 THIS YEAR

117 all time

LIFETIME CARBON OFFSET (IN LBS.)

327M FOR PROJECTS INSTALLED THIS YEAR

1.6B all time

FAMILIES THAT INSTALLED BATTERY STORAGE

117 THIS YEAR

236 all time

Energy Equity and Inclusion
Ensuring everyone can benefit from solar

Creating an energy system that's accessible to everyone is central to our mission. Director of Equity and Inclusion Yesenia Rivera discussed why this is important and how we incorporate it across our work.

Tell me why equity and inclusion is important to our work.
It's always been the cornerstone of what we do. Our mission is to make solar as accessible as possible for as many people as possible. In the last couple of years, we're really honing in on that just transition, making sure it's a real transition, and that we're not just swapping out fossil fuels for renewables. We're actually changing our energy system. Making sure that everyone has access to solar is key to that just transition. We can't reinvent an energy system and move forward if we're leaving folks behind.

It's very important that we address barriers because there are too many for low- to moderate-income families and frontline communities to be able to access clean energy. It's time to focus on creating access for them.

We intentionally address this work by starting small before we scale up. Why is that?
It's part of our theory of change. We don't understand all the barriers when we're starting this kind of work. It's important that we don't overpromise and underdeliver. Starting small helps us understand the local barriers. There's no one-size-fits-all answer for these situations. Every jurisdiction is going to have different barriers. There are going to be different ways of addressing them.

Starting small gives us a chance to actually understand what is stopping people from going solar. It also gives us an opportunity to build a network of supporters. People start realizing that energy equity is a problem and access to solar is a problem. There's not only a need, but the community wants this. We show that, yes, there is demand for this. We're able to scale up after that.

In Colorado, we started a pilot in the community of Mountain Village. About 10-12 homes ended up benefiting from a rebate. Not only did Mountain Village see how popular it was and add an extra $500,000 for the next year, but the County of Denver saw those results. They committed to three years worth of funding to create subsidies for low- to moderate-income families. We start small, but it creates a snowball effect. Once you start, you get it in motion, start building support, and show that there is demand to scale up.

What have we accomplished to expand solar access in the past year?
In Puerto Rico, we addressed how to create bulk purchase campaigns and bring in different communities that we weren't necessarily addressed before. We translated a lot of materials into Spanish and increased our Spanish presence in terms of social media and our information sessions so that folks could go solar regardless of their primary language. We've also launched more than 20 pilots this year. We're mostly tackling how we can create a program that's sustainable and equitable in terms of financing that changes the economics for low- to moderate-income families to access solar.

Tell me about barriers we're facing and how we can overcome them.
The biggest is financing. How do we pay for these systems? Who pays for these systems? We know it's going to have to be a combination of philanthropy, tax credits, and loans.

We also have the homeownership barrier. If you live in a multi-family home or you're renting, you don't have access to clean energy in every state. Not every state has a community solar program.

That's something we're working on. It's not just the work of the Energy and Equity Department to make sure that folks have access regardless of their income levels and regardless of whether or not they own their home. It's a combination with state work and with our policy team.

As this program has grown, what's changed and what have we learned from it?
It's gone from adding components to a co-op here and there to setting our program goals in general so that we're addressing equity and inclusion. Then we're addressing inclusion as a whole, not just because we're offering a subsidy with a co-op here and there, but because we're addressing all of the barriers we can.

As we move forward, we're increasing capacity. We've added a fellowship this year. It's been really helpful to increase that capacity. Hopefully we can keep growing in the next few years so that we have proper support across all of our regions.

Tell me what the next steps are for energy democracy. How do we take what we've learned and build upon that to scale a larger network?
We're working on scaling up. In Minnesota, we had a layer of incentives with loans and donations. We had the GiveSolar model in Virginia (see page 7). We're taking what we learned from those projects — timing, how to combine layers of financing, what to focus on, and crowdfunding — so that we can start scaling these projects up.

We learned that if we're depending on local incentives, the timing of a co-op has to be just right because incentives can run out really quickly. If we're trying to pick an installer, that's going to delay how and when families can apply. We're learning to time our co-ops, we're learning to tap into incentives, and we've done a lot of groundwork in terms of research and working with institutions, especially financial institutions, on developing tools.

The goal for 2022 is to focus on addressing barriers to solar adoption in general, not just a little bit here and a little bit there. We're not content with only transitioning to clean energy but doing so in a matter that's just and equitable. I think that's central to reinventing our energy system and giving control back to consumers.

Expanding solar access through crowdfunding

This year we helped families across the country go solar with donated solar systems. Through our "Share the Sun" crowdfunding campaign and partnership with One Roof Community Housing, we helped eight low- to moderate-income families go solar in the Duluth and Arrowhead area of Minnesota. In Plano, Texas, we partnered with Habitat for Humanity to bring solar to an Afghan immigrant family. **Duluth co-op participant Nathan Holst and Plano co-op participant Abdullah Abed shared their experiences with us.**

Tell me what interested you in going solar.

Nathan: I wanted to go solar for a long time. I learned about it in college. Later I lived in Portland, Oregon and spent a lot of time with environmental activists learning about all of the interlocking global issues around climate change and folks that are super excited about clean energy. I thought, I wonder if I'll be able to have solar someday. That stayed with me.

Abdullah: I'm really interested in solar because in Afghanistan when I worked as a linguist with the U.S. Army we used solar for light. Electricity is not something you always have. One day you will and then another, you will not have any light.

How did you hear about Solar United Neighbors?

Nathan: I heard about Solar United Neighbors through the organization that my house is connected to. My house is a land trust house, and the organization is called One Roof. The organization owns the land, we own the house, and that makes it more affordable. Solar United Neighbors partnered with One Roof and reached out to One Roof homeowners about a solar co-op going on in the area, saying we want to provide funds for income-qualifying folks to get solar.

Abdullah: Habitat told me about this solar program and asked if I was interested. I said yes. Renewable energy, caring about the environment, and giving back to the community is really awesome.

What was your experience like going through the process?

Nathan: I looked into solar a year after we moved into our house and discovered that it would be about $10,000 for a medium-sized system. I thought, wow, we don't really have $10,000 even though I value solar. I wasn't expecting for SUN to say we want to get grants to make this affordable. That was a delightful surprise. We got about a quarter of my medium system paid for from the power company, about half of it was through SUN fundraising, and then I covered a quarter of it. It made it much more affordable for our family.

Abdullah: Overall, it was a really good experience.

Do you have any advice that you would give to other people who are thinking about going solar?

Nathan: If you're a person that thinks you can't afford it and you can get connected to grant funding, don't be afraid to look into it. Folks that are lower income think solar is just for wealthy folks. If you have the ability, especially to get connected to a solar co-op, do it. If you have a value around environmental justice, that's a great way to live that out. It's a really good education and you can educate your neighbors, share it, and get people excited about it.

Abdullah: If you are really in love with your community and giving back and you want independent renewable energy, it's a great idea to go solar.

Abdullah Abed, center, stands in front of his home during his free rooftop solar installation provided by RISE Power; Nathan Holst's rooftop solar installation provided by Wolf Track Energy.

How to launch a crowdfunding campaign

We also helped GiveSolar raise money through the organization's Solar Seed Fund to help Habitat for Humanity homeowners in Virginia go solar. We spoke with **GiveSolar Founder and Director Jeff Heie** about the project.

Tell me about the work that GiveSolar does and how it connects with SUN.

We launched GiveSolar in 2018. Originally, it was focused on working with nonprofit organizations to help them install solar, partly because there's not financial incentives for nonprofits. We also incorporated what came to be known as Solar Barn Raising. This is a volunteer-driven event. We have a collaboration between the installers and volunteers to install the system together.

A couple months ago, I was approached by a friend of mine who serves on a Habitat for Humanity board of a local affiliate. He was interested in figuring out how we could get solar systems on Habitat homes. We had a conversation with the Habitat for Humanity board of the local affiliate and I proposed to them that we try to raise money. That came to be known as the Solar Seed Fund. The board agreed to try to raise $100,000 in order to put solar on about 20 homes in the next five years for the local affiliate. The project is about access to clean energy for low-income homeowners, economic security, and a climate change solution. Eventually, we reached about $127,000, and Solar United Neighbors contributed about $30,000 towards that.

What are some of the successes and challenges of this project?

A big success is the fundraising effort. So many people from a broad swath of our community supported the Solar Seed Fund project and to get Solar United Neighbors involved in this has been a huge success. I've been really impressed with SUN over the years and have felt a ton of support for this project.

A challenge is there's a fair amount of education work that needs to be done regarding the benefits of solar. People aren't very aware about why and how this is going to help them. Electricity rates are going up because the cost of natural gas is going up. A lot of people don't even recognize this makes solar even more beneficial. The cost of sunshine is not going up.

There's a lot of opportunity to expand. Where do we go from here?

I think we need to normalize putting solar on the homes of low-income people. It's such a no-brainer. In Virginia, 75% of households suffer from an unaffordable electricity burden. This project addresses that and works towards equity. Electricity rates are projected to rise by an average of 3.6% every year for the next 10 years. Every year that goes by, this project is becoming more and more relevant because it's allowing homeowners to lock in what they're paying for their electricity at a very low rate. I look forward to the possibilities for the future.

Presentation of the Solar Seed Fund check to Central Valley Habitat for Humanity. Pictured from left to right is David Wenger, Executive Director of Central Valley Habitat for Humanity, Scott Kleist, Chair of the Board of Central Valley Habitat for Humanity, and Jeff Heie, Director of GiveSolar. Photo courtesy of Kirsten Pittman.; Homeowner Charly Ngeleka (top left) worked with Green Hill Solar installer Angel Hernández (top) and volunteers Ashlyn Johns (top right), Bill Miller (bottom right), and Richard Caperton (bottom left) during a Solar Barn Raising event in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Photo courtesy of Randi B. Hagi.


GO SOLAR
Join Our Neighborhood Co-op
SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS.org

Why give the gift of solar?

Generous donations help our organization advance the solar power movement. **Michael A. Mullett and Patricia N. March**'s significant financial contribution to SUN supported low- to moderate-income families in Indianapolis to go solar. Michael shared with us the inspiration behind their donation.

What inspired your donation toward helping low- to moderate-income families in Indianapolis go solar?
My wife and I strongly believe that access to distributed solar should be available to all, irrespective of income, class, race, or other demographic considerations. When we became aware that SUN's Indianapolis "Go Solar" program would include a component specifically designed to bring distributed solar to a number of low- to moderate-income households, including especially but not exclusively to households of color, we decided immediately to include SUN and this program in our charitable giving.

Tell us how you became interested in solar power.
I was a founding member of what was then called the Citizens Energy Coalition (now the Citizens Action Coalition) when it was organized in 1974. The Coalition was part of an organized effort in the late 1970s and early 1980s to develop and promote solar energy.

My wife and I bought our first home together in 1984. We did what we could afford to practice what we preach. We made our home so energy efficient that when it was inspected by a Duke Energy Indiana inspector 30 years later, he told us that it was still "the most energy-efficient home of its style and vintage" he had ever inspected.

Why is advancing the adoption of solar power important to you?
Monopoly utilities have become so powerful as to threaten the American system of free enterprise and popular democracy, at least here in Indiana. Distributed solar power is "people power"—something that individual households, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local government entities can do themselves to reduce both the existential threat of climate change and the economic and political power of utility monopolies.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about supporting our work?
To avoid the most dire consequences of climate change, humanity needs distributed solar power to be adopted widely, quickly, and systematically by ordinary people in their everyday lives.

It is simple, practical logic to support SUN by participating in its solar projects, joining in its public policy advocacy actions, and contributing financially to its work as an organization.

Bringing the sun to rural Arizona

Portal is a remote Arizona town. It has a significant number of people who want to go solar but no local solar companies. We launched a co-op in the area to make going solar easier. Co-op participant **Dr. Barbara Ellis-Quinn** shared her experience with us.

Describe Portal and why solar is important to the community.
This is a unique community. It's very rural, but it's also a place that has a scientific research center. Lots of scientists like me and my husband came out here first to do scientific research. I would say just about one hundred percent of those scientists are environmentalists at heart and want to do the best things for our planet. All of our friends and neighbors that didn't already have solar jumped on the bandwagon when this came.

Why did you decide to go solar?
We built our house here to be a solar house 26 years ago, before this kind of technology was available. We wanted everything to be environmentally-friendly in all the ways possible. It's a straw bale house and it's a long rectangle that was oriented perfectly for solar on our roof, so when Solar United Neighbors was introduced to this community, we and a lot of other people jumped at the chance to be able to get going after all these years.

How did you hear about Solar United Neighbors?
A friend of ours was the one who got in contact with [SUN Arizona Program Director] Bret Fanshaw and had it started. That was Paul Hirt, who's worked a lot in energy and environmental stuff at Arizona State University. He decided we should do a community-wide thing because some people here had gotten solar, but it was very hard because we're very rural and nobody wanted to come all the way out here.

Tell me more about your participation in the co-op.
We were one of the first ones to sign up once we heard about the co-op. All of us were invited to participate in the selection of the company that would do the installation. We went through all the presentations and helped to make the vote on which company would do it. We thought it was fairly clear-cut.

Now that you have a solar installation, what differences have you noticed on your electric bill?
We are making more electricity than we're using when we're not here and I think that's going to continue even when we are here. I have a feeling we have enough generation that we're not going to need to pay for any electricity ever again.

Do you have any advice that you would give to other people who are thinking about going solar?
I would definitely recommend going through a co-op. They are wonderful. If we had to do all of the groundwork on our own, it probably would have been so intimidating. We would have said forget it.

Dr. Barbara Ellis-Quinn and her husband Ron in front of their home.

8 Weeks to Solar

A new way to go solar together

Solar co-ops are just one way we help people go solar. We've also developed a two-month-long program to provide education and support people interested in solar energy. With the help of SUN and support from peers, participants are able to go solar on their own. **Pilot program participant Susanna** shared her experience with us.

Tell me what made you decide to go solar.
It's something that I've been thinking about for a long time. When we bought our house, I felt guilty and concerned about living in a single family house and having an increased carbon footprint. Then we were expecting a baby and we wanted to do everything that we could to help ensure that our baby would have a clean and healthy planet to live in and to make sure that we're leaving a good legacy for her. We thought this aligns with our values, it aligns with what we want for our daughter, and it's a good investment.

Why did you choose to go solar through this program specifically?
I was initially interested in doing a co-op, but that wasn't available. Then I heard about this support group in D.C. for people looking to go solar. I found the process of identifying installers and weighing the different proposals was very intimidating, but having a neutral third party to be able to walk me through it and having other neighbors who were in the same boat and being able to build questions with them was very reassuring. It's a huge investment and there's kind of an information asymmetry when you're just getting into solar between you and the potential installer. So, I felt very nervous about doing it to begin with, but having Solar United Neighbors in my back corner made me feel that we chose the right installer. It helped me make the mental leap for something we were interested in but that was an intimidating process to get started on.

What did you think about the program? Did anything surprise you while going through the process?
It was very positive and extremely helpful to be able to bounce ideas off of both Solar United Neighbors staff and other members on the listserv. Having SUN review the contracts was just an extra layer of security. It was very reassuring that this was the right thing to do and the right way to go about it. What surprised me was how well-informed I became through the process and that it wasn't as intimidating as I thought it would be from the get-go. By the end of it, I was coming into conversations with installers knowing more about how the market functioned in D.C. than they did.

Now that you've had your system for several months, how's it been performing so far?
Brilliantly. I love checking the app once a day to see how our solar panels are performing and the system is more than meeting our energy needs. We've had negative electric bills.

Do you have any advice that you would give to anybody else who's interested in going solar?
Going through Solar United Neighbors really simplifies the process. I strongly recommend joining the organization. It's not as intimidating as it seems from the get-go. This is our planet's future, so if you have the resources and you have the right roof, go for it.

Installers place solar panels on a D.C. home.


GO SOLAR

How partners make the sun shine

Co-op participant Richard Delgado's rooftop solar installation, provided by Goldin Solar.

Municipal partners are important to our work. Having the support of the county helped our 2021 Miami-Dade Solar Co-op achieve greater participation than any previous co-op we'd done there. We spoke with **Senior Resilience Program Manager Patricia Gomez and Senior Resilience and Sustainability Coordinator Susannah Troner** of the Miami-Dade County Office of Resilience to discuss the benefits of our partnership.

Tell me about the work you do for Miami-Dade County and how you work with Solar United Neighbors.

Patricia: We focus primarily on the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. What we try to do is expand the use of renewable energy for all sorts of things that are tied to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the community.

The Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution in support of SUN a few years ago. SUN offered a co-op for Miami-Dade County employees. During that time, we helped with meetings and promotional efforts via internal and external communications.

We also joined the Rocky Mountain Institute cohort in 2020, [a collection of cities that developed solar co-op programs targeted to underserved communities]. SUN was part of that. We worked together with the City of Miami Beach to enable the local LMI [low- to moderate-income] community to be able to benefit from a solar co-op program. After the cohort ended, we continued to focus on LMI participation in co-ops.

How does our partnership benefit Miami-Dade County?

Susannah: We know from studies that neighbors pay attention to what neighbors do, so the more homes that we can have that have on-site solar in different neighborhoods, the more people will start to think about this as a viable option for themselves.

It's very beneficial for the community because it will help people save money and there's the added benefit that it also helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our Miami-Dade Solar Co-op was the largest we've had in the county, with more than 250 members. Why do you think it was so successful?

Patricia: This was the first time we strategized together. We had frequent communication. We were organized, we followed a schedule of events, and we tried a few new marketing strategies. Expanding the inner circle of the people we worked with was also very helpful. People also trust SUN when you talk about the experiences of others using solar co-ops to install solar because you're a neutral party.

What's been the most memorable takeaway from working with SUN throughout the co-op process?

Susannah: It's very gratifying that the collaboration has resulted in having such a strong registration for the largest co-op in the county. The expansion to try to approach low- to moderate-income households is also very exciting. [SUN South Florida Program Coordinator] Laura Tellez was able to identify a system that could be donated to an LMI household.

How can we continue to build upon the success we've had in Florida to further educate people about clean energy and empower them to take action?

Patricia: We need to try to find funding to really engage with the LMI community. People don't understand that there are many federal incentives that discount the price of a solar system. We need to continue communicating the existing incentives and benefits.

Susannah: I always think about what people pay attention to the most. They pay attention to their wealth and their health. Educating around those two issues about how much more money you will have in your pocket over the long term and how it improves community health are important messages.

Coming together is a keystone for solar growth

Our Solar Policy Action Team (SPAT) is a team of highly-engaged volunteers from across Pennsylvania fighting for better solar policy. We spoke with **SPAT activist Kathy Hrabovsky** to learn about the team's approach and her experience.

Tell me what the Solar Policy Action Team does.
We engage with Solar United Neighbors and then reach out to our networks about what we need to do to advance renewable energy sources, particularly solar, in Pennsylvania. That includes local and national elected officials and our communities.

What interested you about joining SPAT? What's your experience been like?
I was interested in joining to stay abreast of what's happening in the state. SUN is very good at presenting concise action items we need to address. I like being part of the action team. I get great information in a fast and simple way.

SPAT is a great group of people. [SUN Pennsylvania Program Director] Henry McKay and the staff are doing a great job at keeping us connected. The more that SUN and this team can do to send out concise messaging that folks can send to their networks, whether it be email, social media, or calls, is great to keep going.

Talk about the successes and challenges the team has seen throughout the past year.
Many of our team members have written letters to the editor, and we did make progress this year statewide in advancing solar.

Tell me about the goals that SPAT hopes to accomplish in 2022.
We hope to keep the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act purchase amount required by the Public Utility Commission moving upward and increasing so that utilities are required to purchase more renewable energy, particularly solar, in the years to come. We also hope RGGI, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, helps advance that in the state.

SUN and solar supporters gathered in February 2020 at the Pennsylvania Solar Congress to discuss solar energy.

Taking solar on the road

We hosted a series of events to educate Marylanders about the variety of available resources to lower their energy use and save money on renewable energy. We spoke with **Maryland Program Director Kimberly Armstrong** to explore the program.

Explain what the Energy Roadshow is and how the program works.

The Energy Roadshow is a pilot we did this year in Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and Anne Arundel County. The goal was to raise awareness in these communities about available resources involving energy efficiency and assistance. It was also a way to connect legislators with their communities. It shows them their constituents really need these resources.

Did you come across any barriers?

We did the first event in Takoma Park in Montgomery County. It has a huge Hispanic and Latino population, which is also underserved. There was a big communication barrier because most people didn't speak English. A lot of the materials we had were not translated into Spanish, so we had to utilize interpreters and equipment to translate our message.

Overall, the Energy Roadshow was a success. Tell me more about what made it successful.

For the first one, it went very well. We had very good participation, entertainment, and food. In Montgomery County, more than 100 people came out. We had close to 100 people in Anne Arundel County too and that's where we're looking to do our next co-op. I made a lot of connections and partnerships there.

Collaboration with key partners was crucial to our success. We had state, local, and community programs all working together and everybody brought their own information and expertise to the table.

What have we learned from holding this series of events?

We learned that a lot of people need help and a lot of people want and need to be educated about clean energy, including access to resources and how to reduce their utility costs.

Talk about next steps. Will you host another series, and if so, how will it differ?

We're planning to do another in 2022. I want to be more proactive with pre-planning, partnership development, and connecting with partners that will spread the word even more. There are lots of avenues we can take to get the word out. It went really well, but I would like to see us expand and try to do it in different parts of the counties we held this first series in. This could very well be duplicated in other states too.

PHOTOS: SUN staff and volunteers in attendance at New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park; Attendees look on as Maryland Program Director Kimberly Armstrong gives a summary of SUN's work around residential solar to make it more equitable and accessible across low- to moderate-income communities.

SUN in the news

Media coverage is an important way we demonstrate solar's value, connect with new co-op members, and educate policymakers. Below is a sample of the 350 stories our work generated this year.

ARIZONA PUBLIC MEDIA
DECEMBER 2, 2021
Nonprofit helps homeowners find good price for solar panels

KARE-TV MINNEAPOLIS
NOVEMBER 22, 2021
New solar co-op launches to slash energy costs

INDIANAPOLIS STAR
NOVEMBER 16, 2021
How many solar panels do I need? Does solar really save me money? Your questions answered

ARIZONA DAILY STAR
NOVEMBER 5, 2021
Program helps streamline the solar-buying process for Tucsonans

WESTWORD
OCTOBER 8, 2021
Denver Joins Solar United Neighbors for a Project With a Bright Future

THE DENVER CHANNEL
OCTOBER 5, 2021
Nonprofit helps neighbors get group discount on solar

NORTH DALLAS GAZETTE
SEPTEMBER 30, 2021
Solar Co-op helps Afghan immigrant family in Plano

LA PORTE COUNTY HERALD-DISPATCH
SEPTEMBER 15, 2021
$21 NIPSCO bill shows Michigan City homeowner's switch to solar was 'right choice'

CANARY MEDIA
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021
Puerto Rico wants clean energy. Will the Biden administration listen?

THE GAZETTE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2021
Colorado Springs' first solar co-op offers lower-cost option for members as roof-top arrays grow in popularity

FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS
AUGUST 9, 2021
Solar Energy Shines Brighter in N. Virginia Thanks to Co-Op Help

WDIO-TV DULUTH
JULY 23, 2021
Share the Sun crowdsourcing underway for solar project

CLEANTECHNICA
JULY 23, 2021
30 Million Solar Homes Initiative Promises 1.77 Million Jobs

ORLANDO SENTINEL
JULY 2, 2021
Florida rises and shines among states with most solar energy

MINNPOST
JUNE 21, 2021
Solar panels can save homeowners money, but some HOAs bar installation. Lawmakers are trying to change that.

FOX 26 HOUSTON
JUNE 17, 2021
Home solar power installations quadrupled in Houston

THE PLAIN DEALER

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS KICKS OFF NINTH SOLAR CO-OP IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY

November 24, 2021

THE HILL

August 2, 2021

A CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION WON'T BE EQUITABLE UNLESS WE MAKE IT THAT WAY

VICE

July 21, 2021

SOLAR POWER BUILDOUT WOULD GENERATE BILLIONS IN ECONOMIC BENEFITS, CREATE MILLIONS OF JOBS, REPORT SAYS

The Washington Post

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT INSTALLING SOLAR PANELS ON YOUR HOME

October 3, 2021

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

June 16, 2021

CONSIDERING SOLAR PANELS FOR YOUR ROOF? HERE'S WHAT I LEARNED.

THE BLADE
JUNE 15, 2021
National nonprofit launches Toledo's first solar co-op

CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE
JUNE 13, 2021
Column: No better time to go solar

WV NEWS
MAY 29, 2021
Editorial: Solar energy law a step in the right direction

WUSF-FM
MAY 27, 2021
Homeowners Across Florida Are Switching To Solar Power Through Group Purchases

FOX 13 TAMPA BAY
MAY 26, 2021
Solar co-ops allow residents to reduce cost by buying panels in bulk

WHUR RADIO WASHINGTON
APRIL 27, 2021
The Benefits of Going Solar

HOUSTON PUBLIC MEDIA
APRIL 21, 2021
Houston Launches Citywide Solar Co-op

GRIST
APRIL 9, 2021
In Pennsylvania, a bipartisan coalition is pushing to free community solar from bureaucratic red tape

KTAR RADIO PHOENIX
APRIL 6, 2021
2 co-ops launch to help Phoenix, Scottsdale residents go solar

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL
APRIL 5, 2021
Solar power purchase agreements bill moves closer to passage after Senate Judiciary approval

COLUMBUS DISPATCH
MARCH 11, 2021
Opinion: Legislature must stop utilities from using Ohioans' money to fund political games

ARIZONA DAILY SUN
MARCH 9, 2021
New co-op hopes to bring cheaper solar installation to Flagstaff, Coconino County

TAMPA BAY TIMES
FEBRUARY 17, 2021
Column: Why now is the perfect time for Tampa Bay to go solar

THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS
FEBRUARY 10, 2021
Plano solar co-op encourages residents to embrace renewable energy

DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE
JANUARY 29, 2021
Solar co-op heads for Northland

Taking distributed solar to new heights with 30 Million Solar Homes

Our visionary 30 Million Solar Homes (30MSH) campaign seeks to address climate change, economic downturn, and social injustice through increasing ownership of distributed solar across the country. The ambitious goal is to power one-in-four American households with rooftop and community solar in the next decade. We spoke with 30MSH campaign partner **John Farrell, co-director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and director of their Energy Democracy Initiative**, to discuss our 2021 efforts and accomplishments.

Tell me about the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and how it connects with SUN.

We're a nonprofit organization and our broad mission is to build local power to fight corporate control. We have a really strong focus on allowing access to clean energy for everyone, especially through leveraging the power of communities. Distributed solar, like Solar United Neighbors works on, is a really key approach to providing more clean energy to the grid.

What are the main goals of this campaign and how will they affect Americans and the environment?

The 30 Million Solar Homes campaign is all about making sure that there's broad access to solar among millions of Americans. Thirty million solar homes would be about one in four U.S. households. We could create more than 1.7 million jobs to install enough solar to reach 30 million solar homes. That would generate $70 billion in electric bill savings in just the first five years. It would have emissions reductions comparable to removing 42 million cars from the road.

More important than those statistics is the fact that it would represent a dramatic shift in who owns the clean energy future. So much of our past with our energy system has been reliant on big corporations and utilities to own it. This would be a chance for ordinary Americans to own a slice of the clean energy economy.

Why did we land on 30 million homes? Is there something unique about that number?

In Australia, they've had significant development of distributed solar, and in Hawaii, it's been very economical to go solar. Both of those places are past one in four households. So we thought, let's set a goal that is both ambitious but also achievable in the sense that we know it's been accomplished in other places.

Talk about the efforts that were made over the past year with this campaign.

What's probably the most remarkable component is that we got more than 300 organizations to sign on to the broad platform of the 30 Million Solar Homes campaign.

That was a lot of the work. Working with SUN and the Initiative for Energy Justice, our other campaign partner, we sought out groups who thought this was an important advocacy goal, but also partners willing to work together and focus specifically on rooftop and community solar. Then we developed the policy goals and ways to spread the economic and financial benefit as widely as possible.

A core secondary goal was to get as many benefits as possible to low-income folks and folks living in marginalized communities. Maybe they're in a rural community where it's been hard to afford solar and energy costs are high. Perhaps they're in an urban community and they haven't had access to capital to build a solar array. Or, they don't have enough money to pay the upfront cost. We're focused not just on how we get to the number of 30 million, but how do we do that in a way that changes who can access solar.

This campaign is instrumental in driving better federal policies around solar energy. What have we accomplished so far?
I think the most interesting and probably the most obvious illustration of the effect of this campaign is the proposed Build Back Better legislation. I'll give a few examples of things that are in there that we were advocating for that passed the House's version of the bill:

- An extension of the federal tax credits for solar for another 10 years
- Expanding tax credits so that low- and moderate-income households, nonprofits, schools, and tribes can benefit from them
- A grant program to help affordable housing providers do more with clean energy
- Loan guarantees for tribal energy projects
- $2 billion dollars for the Rural Energy for America Program, which has helped a lot of farms and rural businesses go solar

What are some of the barriers we've hit with this campaign and how are we addressing them?
One of the challenges that we face in accomplishing our broad clean energy goals is that a lot is locked up in monopoly utility companies' power and market structure. Utilities have often proven to be barriers to our progress on clean energy. One of the powers of the 30 Million Solar Homes campaign is that it's about diffusing political power and economic power and spreading it more widely.

I think there's also been some disagreement over the years about the fastest way to get to clean energy and reach climate goals, whether or not it's quicker to do it through small rooftop projects versus large, utility-scale projects. I've seen us successfully overcome this by building a lot of supportive advocacy. There are already many incentives and I think there's growing recognition that we need all of them to meet our goals.

SUN ACTION TELLS A STORY TO FIGHT FOR SOLAR RIGHTS

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS ACTION

Stories from real solar owners are more persuasive than impersonal data. That's why this year we launched SUN Action, a 501(c)(4). SUN Action represents solar homeowners and everyone who wants to benefit from solar energy. It connects solar owners and supporters directly to policymakers.

Through SUN Action, solar supporters met with congressional staff from the key states of West Virginia and Arizona. Two participants in the Rural Energy for America Program shared with West Virginia staffers how the program helped them go solar and why it's a smart investment for West Virginia. A mix of solar supporters and an installer met with Arizona congressional staff. They provided unique perspectives on how solar has benefited the state.

In addition to these one-on-one meetings, we also developed a new Solar Stories page (www.solarunitedneighbors.org/stories). This collection of personal narratives puts a face and experience to the idea of going solar. Policymakers who visit the page can see how solar benefits their constituents.

Mountaineers free to install solar

After years of grassroots advocacy, West Virginia lawmakers passed a bill to enable Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). This will enable more West Virginians to benefit from solar. To discuss what this means for the state and solar customers, we spoke with **Danny Chiotos of Mountain View Solar**, West Virginia's oldest solar installation company.

What are Power Purchase Agreements and how do they work?

Power Purchase Agreements are a tried-and-true way to make solar more accessible for companies and organizations who can't afford the upfront cost or can't use the federal tax credit. Power Purchase Agreements allow a third party to own a solar array and receive and monetize the tax benefits of that solar array and other financial elements. The host or building owner gets the electric bill benefits of a solar array, so they get the reduced electric bill, but they buy their electricity from the owner of that solar system.

This bill has been years in the making. Tell me more about that and how it affects customers.

In West Virginia we all saw Power Purchase Agreements as being a primary mechanism used by governments, corporations, school systems, etc., to implement larger-scale solar facilities. A school system, for example, generally doesn't have a million and a half to two million or three million dollars sitting around their bank account to use for something like solar. In states like Maryland, Power Purchase Agreements and their immediate electric bill benefit have been a primary way to see larger-scale solar systems move forward.

What's the impact this has on West Virginia as a whole?

It's a vital tool that opens the door for projects to move forward. Having more options for large projects is essential to explore them and open up opportunities to companies. We can also open the door for more policies like virtual net metering and community solar. These are tools that the solar industry can use to save people money, create jobs, sustain jobs, and really build out clean energy in West Virginia.

Are there any limitations in the bill that people weren't expecting to see?

West Virginia's net metering policy—kind of—allows for virtual net metering, but it's minimal. We're not allowed to generate electricity in Site A and deliver it to Site B that's a hundred miles away but in the same utility territory. I think that's the biggest limitation of the Power Purchase Agreement law now.

How can we build on the success of this bill for the future of solar energy in West Virginia?

Engaging in rate cases with the Public Service Commission is one area so that companies have more control over their energy bills. I think offering next-step policies like virtual net metering, community solar, and any federal-level incentives are key. There's certainly tax incentives that can be stacked and benefit commercial projects in West Virginia. This bill is not a cure-all, but it's a step in the right direction and the solar industry has to keep engaging at the Public Service Commission and the legislature, as well as federally, to create the tools needed for projects to be able to move forward like they are in adjacent states.


MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
SCHOOL BOARD
ADMINISTRATION
STUDENTS
4 SOLAR


MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
NORLAND

Home is where the solar is

We launched a state-wide education campaign to support Ohio homeowners who have wanted to go solar but are blocked by their homeowner's association (HOA). **Ohio Program Associate Mryia Williams** was a key supporter of this campaign. We sat down with her to discuss her experience.

Tell me what sparked your interest in working on this campaign and how you got involved.
As a long-time clean energy advocate and after adding an electric vehicle and electric lawn equipment to my own home, I had started to research solar panels for my own rooftop. I live in a housing development with a homeowner's association. I knew that the HOA would need to be at the top of my list of asks to see if I would be even allowed to have solar panels. It was a long back-and-forth conversation with the HOA from then on.

At the start of 2020, a solar co-op launched and we signed up. Around then, there was an HOA bill introduced in the Ohio Senate. It aimed to simplify the process of going solar for those in homeowner's associations. It had common-sense language to bring consistency to the approval process from one development to another.

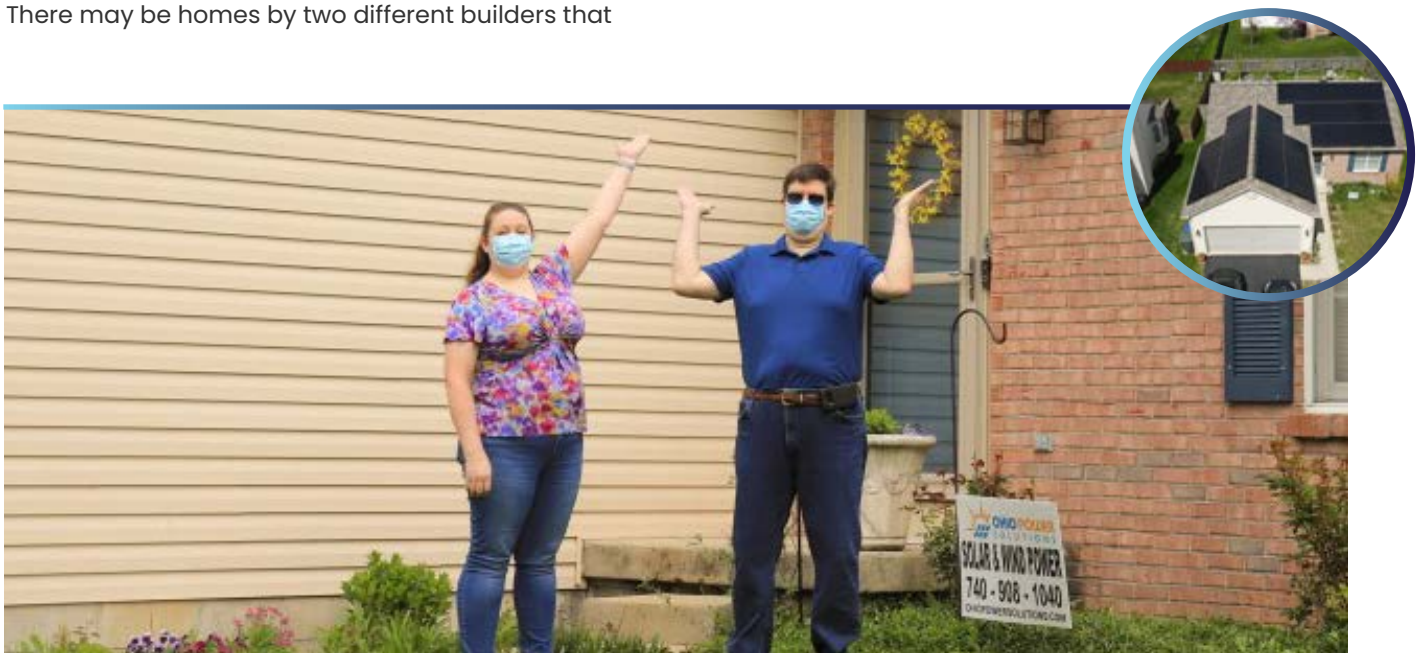
Our rooftop solar was installed in November 2020.

How are Ohioans typically affected by HOAs when it comes to solar?
There are a variety of ways. Some HOAs block solar outright. Some have rules based on solar myths. There may be homes by two different builders that are under two different HOAs in the same community. Your neighbor might be allowed to have solar while you're not.

Did you face any challenges while working on this campaign?
There aren't many resources that provide actual numbers of how many people want to go solar but can't because of their HOA.

Another was trying to establish my audience. Solar United Neighbors has a great list of solar advocates, but most of them didn't have to face off with this HOA approval process. After all, they were able to install solar. These folks were great allies, but we needed to be able to show denial stories to be able to show why we need this kind of legislation.

What can we do to continue fighting for energy rights in Ohio?
We have to see things not just proposed but actually moving forward and we have to find a way to not just find advocates and voices to begin with, but to keep them motivated on completing the fight.



Mryia Williams and her husband in front of their home; Aerial view of the Williams' home.

Making Colorado a solar financing pioneer

We're working on legislation to help Coloradans save money, create jobs, and build a sustainable and equitable energy system. **Colorado Program Director Bryce Carter** shared what we've accomplished, what we've learned, and what we hope to achieve.

Tell me what this program is and how it will benefit Coloradans.

This program allows a utility to create energy improvements at a home. Program participants save money because they're using less electricity. They do so without any debt, credit, or really any type of liability. Customers can experience energy savings right off the bat while also improving their home in terms of safety and comfort. The program is modeled after Pay As You Save programs that are popular in other states.

There's a key difference between an inclusive investment program, like this one, and on-bill financing. Both programs allow you to pay for an investment on your utility bill. But a model like Pay As You Save is designed to provide savings for the customer, without them taking on long-term debt. On-bill financing could potentially significantly increase customers' electric bills, depending on the types of improvements they have.

We're not necessarily opposed to on-bill financing, but we want to ensure energy equity. It's important to have this Pay As You Save option. It allows customers to opt in to a program that will help ensure they're saving on their bills versus potentially increasing them.

What is SUN's role with the legislation?

We've been the primary lead of this effort for the last year to move forward legislation that will support having the Public Utilities Commission evaluate the best inclusive utility investment program for Colorado.

It's great when we see people going solar, but it's still a niche market. We need to look at how we can address solar equity. We want to make sure there's an equity lens in terms of how this program is implemented. That's why we're asking the Public Utilities Commission to consider disproportionately impacted communities as a key consideration in designing the program. The Commission must make sure this program prioritizes frontline communities, communities of color, and other impacted communities.

We're really excited to elevate this and move forward because we've seen the success that Pay As You Save has had across the country.

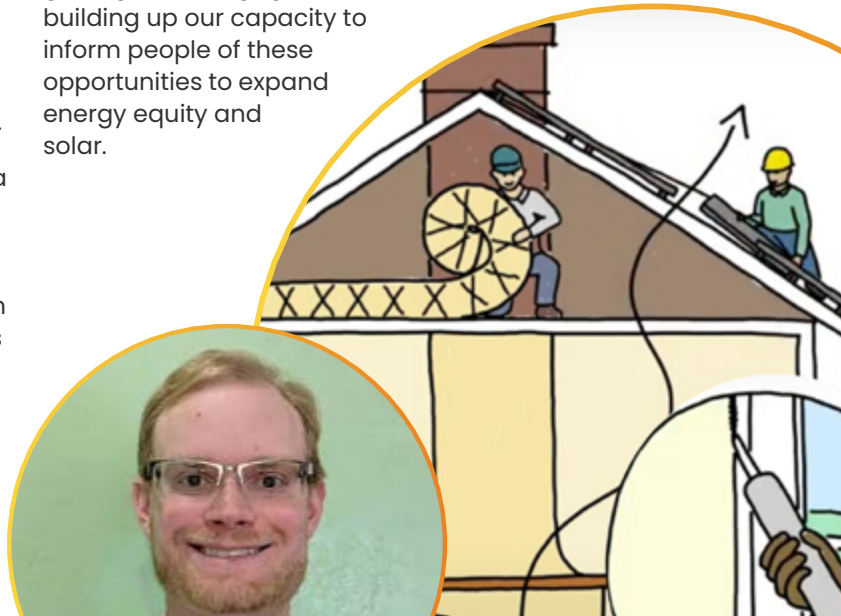
What have we learned from advocating for this legislation?

Advocacy around policy is very difficult. There are a lot of different stakeholders with a lot of different perspectives. Being able to communicate with them to provide transparency and inclusion is a challenge.

We want to make sure that we're including partners from the onset of our planning process to make sure that they're welcomed, their input is heard, and that they also have the opportunity to contribute as we develop this program. Not every single idea that every single partner wants can be included. We're trying to facilitate relationships and the delicate balance of needs to accomplish this legislation.

Talk about what you hope to see accomplished in 2022.

I would love to see this legislation passed. We've done a lot of excellent inside game work supporting this legislation, but I'm excited to grow our outside game. This means bringing in more volunteers, getting them engaged, and building up our capacity to inform people of these opportunities to expand energy equity and solar.



This graphic shows a number of energy improvements that can be made at a home through Pay As You Save.

Financial statement

Solar United Neighbors receives financial support from foundations, other nonprofit entities, government agencies, individual donors, membership dues, and earned income from our on-the-ground programs. These diverse revenue sources help ensure we continue to be financially secure.

January 2021 - December 2021

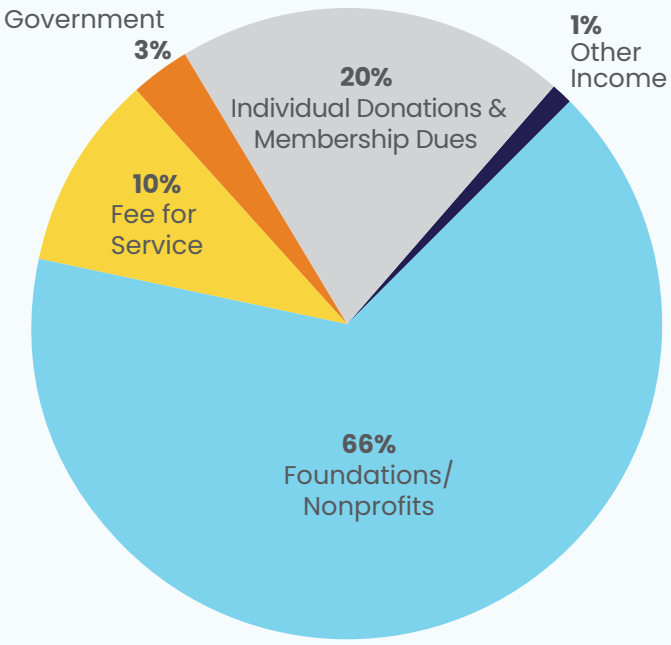
Revenue	
Foundations/Nonprofits*	$4,484,550.00
Fee for Service	$694,700.00
Government **	$230,502.00
Individual Donations	$1,307,265.12
Membership Dues	$30,714.31
Other Income	$48,273.02
Total Revenue	**$6,796,004.45**

Expenses	
Employee Expenses	3,022,676.14
Professional Fees	434,426.42
Engagement Expenses	22,881.49
Public Relations	215,965.61
Office Expenses	590,879.37
Facilities	127,853.57
Travel	23,675.47
Low-Income Solar Project Expenses	168,827.60
Total Expenses	**$4,607,185.67**
NET INCOME	**$2,188,818.78**

* *Revenue of $1,500,000 promised for 2022 is not included in the above numbers.*

** *Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness of $879,000 is not included in the above numbers since the expenses were booked in 2020.*

Solar United Neighbors 2021 revenue by source



How to support our work

You can make a tax-deductible donation to Solar United Neighbors to help people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. Your gift will go to work immediately. Every dollar makes a difference!

You can donate in the following ways:

Monthly giving (Solar Sustainer)
For as little as 16 cents per day ($5/month), our Solar Sustainer monthly giving program offers an easy, affordable, and effective way to sustain our programs to spread solar power. For you, it makes the donation process much more convenient. Our Solar Sustainers enable ongoing impact. Visit www.solarunitedneighbors.org/sustainer

Donor-advised fund
Donate via your donor-advised fund (DAF). If you have one set up with Fidelity Charitable®, Schwab Charitable®, or the BNY Mellon Charitable Gift Fund®, you can quickly jumpstart the process of donating to Solar United Neighbors through your DAF by visiting www.solarunitedneighbors.org/daf

Securities
Donate publicly traded securities (stocks, mutual funds, and exchange-traded funds) to Solar United Neighbors. It's a simple, quick process! Visit www.solarunitedneighbors.org/securities

Combined Federal Campaign
Federal employees and retirees can support Solar United Neighbors through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Enter our CFC #86613 on your pledge form.

Amazon Smile
You can give while shopping on Amazon. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases. Visit our Amazon Smile page.

Online or by mail
To donate online with a credit card or via your bank account, visit www.solarunitedneighbors.org/donate.

Make your check or money order payable to "Solar United Neighbors."
Mail your donation as follows:

Solar United Neighbors
Attn: Development Dept. - AR21
1350 Connecticut Ave NW, Ste 412
Washington, DC 20036

Donations to Solar United Neighbors are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Solar United Neighbors is a U.S. tax-exempt charitable organization (tax identification number 46-2462990) under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS

www.solarunitedneighbors.org
1350 Connecticut Ave NW #412
Washington, DC 20036

202.888.3601
info@solarunitedneighbors.org