

A 4,400-watt photovoltaic array on an Oregon island

EWEB, 500 4th St, Eugene. The cost is \$10 per car or \$5 to ride in a tour-provided van. Tickets for those wishing to use their own transportation can be purchased at EWEB until 1 pm.

“There’s a lot of exciting stuff this year,” says Tom Scott, a local solar contractor and advocate who’s retiring this year “after 4,000 solar installations and keeping 10,000 tons of carbon from going into the atmosphere.” Scott says technology advances are improving the return on investment in solar power.

Participants in the tour will get a copy of a slick new 88-page magazine published by the Oregon Department of Energy. — *TJT*

**LOCAL HOME TAPS UNDERGROUND FOR HEAT**

You’ve heard of solar, wind and hydro energy. But what about heat from the earth? Often overlooked but full of potential, geothermal heating is a promising energy alternative for households in Eugene. Because

geothermal heat pump systems draw heat from the ground rather than from electricity, they are more efficient, saving money and minimizing air pollution.

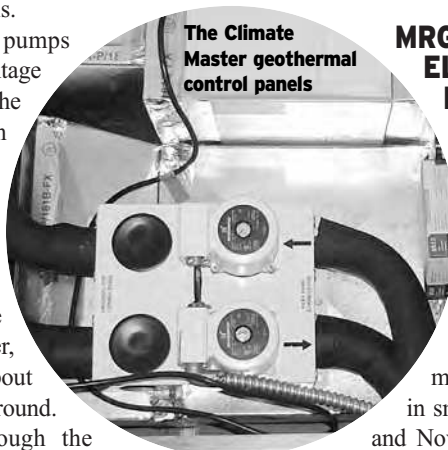
Rafael and Barbara Aldave are pleased with the geothermal ground source heat pump system installed at their home in southwest Eugene. Although its installation cost the Aldaves close to \$14,000 (including trenches and retrofit duct work), they received a \$1,500 tax credit from the state, and the energy-efficient system reduced their monthly electricity bills.

Geothermal heat pumps work by taking advantage of the temperature in the shallow ground, which constantly hovers around 55 degrees despite the temperature of the outside air. The system’s key component is the ground heat exchanger, a pipe loop buried about five feet deep in the ground. Water circulates through the loop to absorb or release heat, always returning to the house around 55 degrees. In the winter, the heat pump takes heat from the

loop and moves it through the house’s ducts. In the summer it does the reverse, pumping hot air from the house to the loop. Or, in the Aldaves’ case, excess hot air is piped straight to the water heater, saving even more energy.

The biggest factor limiting geothermal heat pump installations is space, because the pipe loop needs to pass through about 500 feet of ground. For that reason, rural homes are often more conducive to geothermal heat pumps than city homes with small yards.

But the savings are indisputable. According to systems engineer John Beasley of Automatic Heat, the standard geothermal heat pump is two to three times more efficient than conventional heating systems, and a new geothermal pump by Climate Masters is four to five times more efficient than anything else on the market. — *Kera Abraham*



The Climate Master geothermal control panels

**MRG GETS BEHIND ELECTION PARTICIPATION**

Two state ballot measures have drawn the attention of a local foundation that supports progressive causes. The McKenzie River Gathering (MRG) Foundation is making available \$8,000 in small grants between now and Nov. 2 for groups working on voter registration and voter mobilization regarding Measures 36 and 37. Priority will be given to groups that are

“reaching Oregon’s low-income communities, women, youth, immigrants, people of color and rural populations; education on divisive issues such as marriage equality; and collaboration and coalition building across issue areas,” says Marjory Hamann, MRG Foundation’s executive director.

Hamann says voters will not only elect our next president, but they will “grapple with ballot measures that have the potential to write unequal treatment into our Constitution (Measure 36), and gut our land use laws (Measure 37).”

In late September, MRG Foundation will be hosting trainers from the national Alliance for Justice and the Western States Center to meet with its grantees in Portland and Eugene. The all-day workshops will provide detailed information about what non-profits can and cannot do, suggest specific actions that groups can take between now and the elections, and offer an opportunity for grantees to share stories and inspire one another to do more.

For more information on the grants, contact Anita Rodgers at (503) 289-1517.

**CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS**

- In the last paragraph of Vanessa Salvia’s music column last week, the phrase “caustic metal” was added by an editor and does not reflect Vanessa Salvia’s opinions regarding the band Eagles of Death Metal.
- In our Eugene Celebration story (9/16) “Seeing Red Over Blues,” the name of The Vipers guitar player was misspelled. It should have read John Ward.

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