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## **U-46 high school touts benefits of solar energy**

**BYLINE:** By Larissa Chinwah lchinwah@dailyherald.com

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In the two months since five solar panels were installed at Streamwood High School, the school has produced enough energy to power 11 houses for one day, offset enough carbon to save the equivalent of six trees and saved the school about \$35 in electricity costs.

"There is nothing more important than the issue of alternative energy to our society," said physical science teacher Greg Reiva, who secured an \$8,000 grant from the Illinois Green Energy Community Foundation.

Streamwood High School and Elgin Area School District U-46 leaders joined members of the district's plant operations team and Streamwood officials Wednesday to rave about the solar panels.

The school is the first in the district to install solar panels. The school has partnered with the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the National Educational Energy Development project and the Foundation for Environmental Education to install the solar panels as well as the classroom components of the project.

Other schools in the area that have installed solar panels include Elgin Academy and Dundee-Crown High School in Carpentersville.

Reiva's sophomore physical science class has harnessed the energy from the sun to power a small greenhouse in classroom C217. There, fluorescent light bulbs are aiding in the growth of red chilis, a basil plant, chives and tomatoes. A meter measuring the amount of electricity generated by the solar panels is installed on a wall next to a standard electrical meter. Reiva said the standard meter often runs backward during the day as excess solar-generated electricity flows onto the electrical grid.

A tracks all of the data related to the south-facing solar panels, including current temperature, kilowatts of energy produced and the environmental benefits.

Students said the project has helped them better understand the science behind energy production, transformation and consumption. In class, students have also calculated the efficiencies of the system.

"We have done a lot of labs on it and written essays on it," said Gabriella Mase, 15, of Streamwood. "We have learned a lot."

U-46 Superintendent Jose Torres said the equipment allows students to see first hand how the sun's rays are turned into electricity in the classroom.

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"It gives students the opportunity to use the technology and creates real life applications," Torres said. "The solar panels garner energy that is transferred to the classroom where students can capture the data. They can use that data for problem solving projects."

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**GRAPHIC:** LARISSA CHINWAH/lchinwah@dailyherald.com Streamwood High School physical science teacher Greg Reiva talks about the solar powered greenhouse in his classroom. The school received an \$8,000 grant from the Illinois Green Energy Community Foundation to install five solar panels on the school.

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