

## Greenville Adds More Solar Panels

One of the largest groups in the state

*By Tony Tagliavia*

GREENVILLE, Mich. (WOOD) - Even on a snowy, sun-deprived January day, the solar array at Greenville High School was generating at least some electricity.

"It's generating through that snow," Greenville Superintendent Peter Haines told 24 Hour News 8. Both the schools and the city have sets of solar panels. It's one of the largest groupings in the state.

Haines said the primary goal of the school's panels is educational.

"We're giving Greenville High School students, and really K-12 students, a knowledge advantage in an emerging technology," he said.

Danny Hansen and his classmates actually had the chance to play a part in the installation.

"That's how I learn best is through doing things myself," the high school junior said.

The total cost of the renewable energy project for Greenville schools? \$1 million.

The district is paying for the project with grant funds -- and by selling the energy to Consumers Energy.

Demand is driven at least in part by state requirements that utilities get some of their energy from renewable sources.

"The combined system at the high school and at Lincoln Heights Elementary should bring in between \$80,000 and \$90,000 a year in revenues," the superintendent said. "That more than pays for the bonds that bought the equipment ... There are so many side benefits and we've put people to work."

That's because the district is buying the panels from United Solar Ovonic or "Unisolar," the Greenville company that moved into a community still reeling from the Electrolux closure.

The city of Greenville has arrays at city hall, at the airport and now at the community center. City leaders are just waiting for the "OK" from Consumers Energy to put the community center panels online, city manager George Bosanic told 24 Hour News 8.

More arrays are planned and the manager said no local property tax dollars have been used in installation. He acknowledged that without grant funding, the panels aren't yet totally viable.

Some city panels produce energy that the city, like the school district, sells to Consumers Energy.

Other panels generate energy for city buildings. Bosanic said the community center panels will cut the city's energy costs.

"We want to be in a position where the cost savings -- we can pass on to the residents of Greenville," he said.

Both the city and the district have a long-term goal of 100% renewable energy for their buildings.

Panels using existing technology could provide more power than the high school needs if they completely covered the building's roof, Haines said.