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CET announces 2008 Green Buildings Events: October 3 and 4

Energy efficiency and solar technologies are among the highlights of the 2008 Green Buildings Open House Tour, slated for Saturday, October 4. During a time of heightened awareness about energy, this seventh annual green buildings event gives the public the chance to tour more than a dozen homes and businesses in the Berkshires to see clean, renewable energy at work and discover the ways people are conserving energy, saving money and protecting the environment.

Among the sites are a dome home, a net zero energy use home, two homes with dedicated passive solar rooms, several homes with new solar evacuated tube hot water systems, numerous examples of solar photovoltaic arrays, and a non-toxic inn where everything is efficient, green and organic. Green building sites are available for viewing at specific times throughout the day on October 4. CET has produced a guide booklet for the Open House with highlights of green building features, photos, and open hours for each site. The booklet is available by calling CET at 413-445-4556 ext. 25 or as a pdf download on www.cetonline.org.

On Friday, October 3, at 5:30 p.m. CET will co-host Building Green in the Berkshires, a pre-tour kick off event at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield. A panel of contractors, designers and homeowners will discuss all aspects of designing, building and living in a green home. Among the panelists will be Chris Derby Kilfoyle of Berkshire Photovoltaic Services in Adams and Craig Robertson of Heliocentrix in Williamstown. Following the panelists' presentations, Green Buildings Open House hosts will describe highlights of their homes and businesses that will be open to the public on Saturday. Locally produced hors d'oeuvres and the CET guide booklet will be provided.

The Open House is part of a region-wide event organized by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) and coordinated locally by the Center for Ecological Technology (CET). Part of the American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour, the Open House presents an opportunity to learn firsthand how incorporating green elements can help reduce heating costs, increase energy conservation and even generate surplus clean energy.

Some of the varied solar technologies that tour-goers will see include a pole-mounted PV system at Caretaker Farm in Williamstown that provides nearly all the electricity the community supported agriculture farm needs. Privacy Campground, also in Williamstown, features a self-built hydropower plant and small wind turbine. There are several newly constructed homes on the tour this year, including Colby Lewis and Dena Bancroft's elegant home in Lenox, which features evacuated tubes and flat plate solar hot

water systems, as well as a dedicated passive solar room. Bill and Margot Moomaw's net zero energy home in Williamstown has the only ground source heat pump system on the tour, as well as a 7.2 kW solar PV array designed to power and heat their home. At Topia Inn in Adams, visitors can see the only roof integrated solar PV in the region, walls crafted of natural earth plaster, energy efficient appliances, as well as a cloud of foam insulation that clings to the rafters in the attic.

A few of the sites are older homes that have been retrofitted with green features, like solar for hot water, electricity, heating or natural light, as well as renovations using reclaimed wood and copper. The Reinauer home in Sheffield has passive and active solar heating, solar hot water collectors and a newly installed 5.6 kW PV array. In addition to evacuated tube solar hot water collectors, the circa 1900 Robertson home in Williamstown reclaimed wide pine boards from a demolition project and created a beautiful new floor in their kitchen.

“Many people believe that our country's energy problems, global warming, and fuel costs are beyond our control,” says Nancy Nysten, associate director of CET. “But the Green Buildings Open House shows specific steps we all can take to make a difference. The chance to talk with those who've already done so is inspiring and demonstrates how everyone can have a positive effect on global issues.”

To find out more about the Open House and energy efficient buildings, and to obtain a copy of the CET booklet, contact CET at 413-445-4556, visit www.cetonline.org or stop by the CET office at 112 Elm Street in Pittsfield, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tour goers can also visit the NESEA website at www.nesea.org, and follow the links to the Berkshire area buildings under Massachusetts.

CET is a non-profit energy and resource conservation organization that has served western Massachusetts since 1976. CET receives funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. CET is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Support for the Green Buildings Open House in Berkshire County is from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative.