

Osceola

energy



Weatherization

Central Missouri Community Action is a nonprofit organization that weatherizes homes throughout central Missouri. The Department of Energy has awarded a \$550,000 grant to help the nonprofit group to weatherize 50 more homes, and 15 of these homes will be retrofitted with geothermal heating systems. CMCA also help homeowners with simple weatherization that will save money and reduce energy consumption. Some easy ways to weatherize are to caulk cracks where air can penetrate into the building as well as replace weather-stripping around doors. More involved weatherization may include insulating ductwork or pipes for radiators and replacing outdated equipment.



Vanpool

Coastal, GA provides vanpooling as an economical way for transportation to and from work within rural communities. Coastal Regional Commission contracted with VPSI, a van transportation service, after a competitive bidding process. VPSI determines its routes by reviewing current commuter routes used by the existing work force and by zip code and cluster analysis. Vanpooling is more economical, as an average commuter traveling to and from work will typically spend \$14 in gas every day. With vanpooling, the average cost is \$5 per day. This includes gas, insurance and vehicle maintenance. Vanpooling also reduces carbon emissions and adds less stress to congested highways. At first it may be hard to overcome objections or misconceptions of vanpooling, but by identifying interested employers and potential commuters, vanpooling can benefit a growing rural community.



Solar Farm

Upper Pittsgrove, PA a small rural town, is considering the prospect of an 82 acre solar farm. The local power company, Atlantic Green Power, would develop a 74.6 megawatt solar farm. This would be enough solar energy to power 15,000 homes. The small town of 3,400 people has concerns about this development, but many believe that a solar farm would be better use of the land than a subdivision, which is the alternative plan.



Switchgrass Biofuel

Prior to the expansion of the west, millions of acres of prairie land were covered with switchgrass. The steel plow, railroad, and city developments over the decades turned this once abundant crop into a part of the past. Although replaced by acres of corn and other crops needed for food production, switchgrass is now becoming a staple in ethanol production. Biofuels made from fast-growing, native grasses could help reduce carbon dioxide pollution and help farming communities become more economically viable. On average, according to Auburn University, 15 tons of dry biomass per acre, over five years yields an average of 11.5 tons-- enough to make 1,150 gallons of ethanol per acre each year. Switchgrass is not your typical grass, it will reach heights of ten feet and stems as thick as a pencil. Its ability to grow fast and convert solar energy into chemical energy makes it great for ethanol production.



Key Points

- Rural communities are susceptible to energy cost fluctuation due to their low population, need for commuting and agriculture dependence.
- To stay economically viable, rural communities must reduce their dependency on oil and seek alternative energy.
- This will require a lifestyle change. A crucial point for any small rural community.

