

Party for Earth Day puts the sun to work

Couple hosts bash to celebrate new solar panels and looks forward to having meter run backward.

By Ryan Vaillancourt
News-Press

Equipped with fluorescent light bulbs and only Energy Star appliances, the North Glendale home of Ted Flanigan and Terry Chan is already "greener" than most. But on the eve of the 37th annual Earth Day, the couple invited friends and neighbors on Saturday afternoon to celebrate the home's latest planet-friendly upgrade — a solar-paneled roof.

With burgers and hot dogs sizzling on the grill, guests of all ages hopped aboard a mechanical lift to see the solar-energy system, which

workers installed piece by piece throughout the day. "In the pioneer days they used to have barn raisings," said Susan Munves, a friend of Flanigan's.

"Now we have solar installations."

As the founder of EcoMotion, an energy and environmental consulting firm based in Irvine, Flanigan is no stranger to the technology that he estimates will shave \$520 off his monthly utility bill.

By converting direct current from the sun's rays into alternating current, the 2.5-kilowatt system will account for up to 80% of the house's electricity use, Flanigan said. And when the summer sun shines the brightest, the panels — which occupy the roof's southern half — will propel Flanigan's utility meter backward, he said.

With anticipation of another hot summer and higher utility

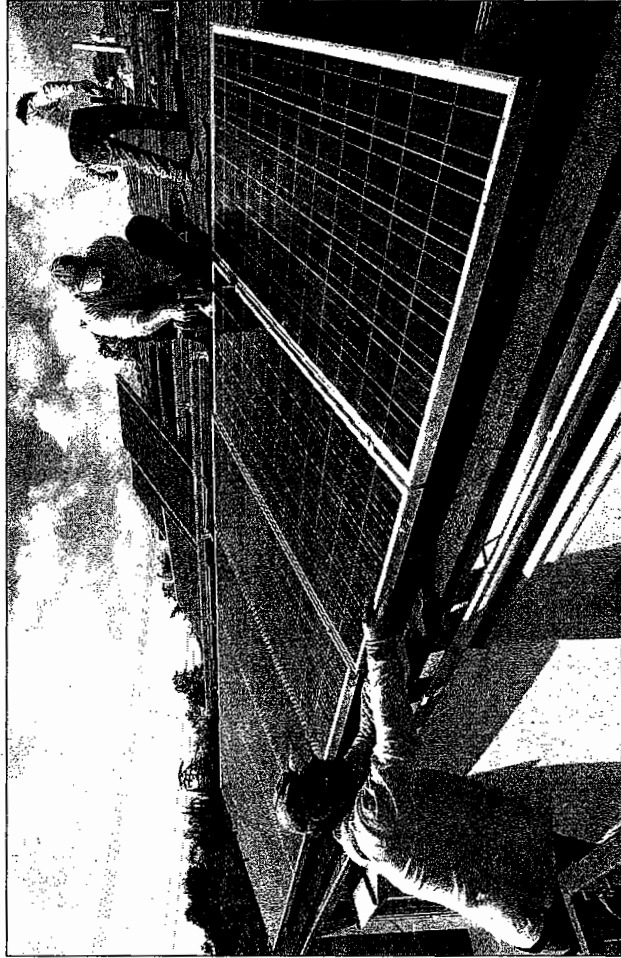
bills, Flanigan and Chan said they wanted to show their friends that solar panels offer a cost-effective alternative.

"People need to kick into gear here, take care of our planet," Flanigan said.

With a solar rebate offered by Glendale Water & Power — calculated at \$4 per watt — and a \$2,000 federal tax credit, Flanigan and Chan are not alone in embracing solar power, said Joseph Dolence, regional installation manager for Akeena Solar, the Los Gatos, Calif.-based contractor that sold and installed the system.

"Over the years the cost of these modules has been high," Dolence said. "With advancing technology, cost of the modules has been going down while the cost of electricity is going up. People are starting to understand that."

But for Chan, the decision to install the system was more about environmental initiative



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A neighbor is taken up on a lift to view the installation of solar panels on Saturday. Ted Flanigan and Terry Chan held a party to celebrate the panels and Earth Day.

than it was economic. "At first I was pretty resentful," Chan said. "He was policing my use, turning off the faucet, turning off the lights. I think in the beginning he would call me his personal, mobile ecological disaster, but shortly after I understood why. It changed my outlook, her, she said.

Chan's Earth-first attitude was learned via Flanigan, who often imposed the lifestyle on her, she said.

realizing how much waste I was producing."

With many people talking about the environment on this Earth Day weekend, Flanigan's guests say that he makes for a fitting Earth Day ombudsman.

"Ted is walking the talk," Munves said.