

Solarize Atlanta Arrives, Bringing Affordable Solar Power

by Chris Campbell

Have you considered adding a solar power system to the roof of your house, but balked at the cost? It may be time to take another look, thanks to the Solarize Atlanta program that just launched.

I'm a long-time Lake Claire resident, and also an electrical engineer. Four years ago I took the plunge and got a solar power system for our house. The solar panels on my roof generate electricity during the day, powering any loads that happen to be on in the house (e.g., air conditioning), and then any excess power flows backwards through the meter and towards the grid, where Georgia Power pays me a small amount for it.

Besides reducing my power bill, I personally like the idea of generating my own power, with zero emissions, and as an engineer I wanted to get more familiar with the technology, so I took the leap even though it was expensive. Now, four years later, the Solarize wave has reached Atlanta, bringing more affordable solar power and giving my neighbors the chance to get a solar power system for a lot less than I paid for mine.

Solarize programs are community-led efforts to bring discounted, high quality solar power systems to a defined region, typically a town or county. Georgia has seen several Solarize programs in recent years, including Solarize Athens and Solarize Decatur-Dekalb. The Solarize Atlanta program launched in April and has multiple local civic organizations partnering up to get the word out and educate their constituents, including Georgia Interfaith Power and Light, Environment Georgia, Central Atlanta Progress, Sierra Club, Southface, and the City of Atlanta's Office of Resilience.



If you had previously dismissed the idea of solar power due to cost, you should take another look because the prices have come down significantly. Today's systems are 30-40% cheaper than when I got my system just four years ago! The Solarize programs get that cost down even further by effectively organizing a bulk purchase via all of the participating households. Solar power is been a somewhat unrealistic fantasy for decades. But in the last five years, costs have finally come down to the point where these systems start to pay for themselves in 5-10 years, instead of 20-30 years. Further, in just the past year or so, energy storage technologies (batteries) have started to become economically viable, and adding storage can make a solar power system more useful, by shifting some of that free sun energy into the evening hours.

For lots more information, check out the Solarize Atlanta website at SolarizeATL.com. Definitely take a look at the short presentation (first

"Download" link on the home page) that explains all of the basics. Then check their calendar ("Important Dates," in right side of website) and

see when they are offering an info session that is at a convenient date and place for you to attend. They'll have community leaders at those sessions, as well as reps from the installer company, and they'll be able to answer your questions. It's also likely that they'll have an open house event over the summer (not yet scheduled by press time for this article) so please do check that website for those dates.

Finally, I would be happy to answer any questions, or even meet up at my house to show you what goes into a solar installation. You can find my contact info at www.ElectrifyAtlanta.com, a reference website that I set up years ago to assist people in transitioning to a cleaner lifestyle, both in transportation (electric vehicles) and in power consumption (solar power). I hope to see you at a Solarize Atlanta event!



Hello—Safe Journey: Skiing in and around Lake Claire

June birthdays, and anniversary, AND marriage

First, congrats again to all Lake Claire Graduates!! Way to go!

- 6/3 Yoni Williams—birthday—turns 6, I think, Harold Avenue and proud Grandma on Delaware Ave
- 6/7 Pen Sherwood, Harold Avenue
- 6/8 Patricia and Ben Farmer—anniversary—Hardendorf
- 6/9 Jacquelyn Howard-Fleming's birthday, Harold
- 6/12 Steve Lamb's birthday, Delaware Avenue (the Clarion loves you, you'd better be reading this)
- 6/12 Happy birthday, Craig Allen, Harold
- 6/13 or 17, we're not sure: Ellen Ericson, happy birthday on Gordon Avenue
- 6/19 Zoe Kaiser's birthday, turns 5; Hardendorf
- 6/20 Sharon Doochin's birthday, Harold Ave
- 6/23 **Congrats** to Sue McAvoy & Bill McKinnon—on their nuptials—Leonardo
- 6/27 Wendy and Boyd Baker's **anniversary**—20+... Leonardo
- 6/28 Shawn Gillespy's 15th birthday, Marlbrook
- 6/28 Wendy Baker, happy birthday! Leonardo

July birthdays

- 7/3 Brandon Bransford, Palifox
- 7/6 Missy Urda, Harold
- 7/9 Carrie Ericson, Gordon Avenue, turning 16 years old
- 7/10 Happy birthday to the Clarion's buddy, basketball and pogo-stick whiz, and everything else he tries... also Frida & DIEGO's buddy—Michael McGill, 11 years old!!!!—Delaware Avenue
- 7/17 Happy birthday to Colin Calderera, Hardendorf.
- 7/24 Jason Weidert, Harold Avenue

Take a minute right now, and send life cycle events / important rights of passage, etc., for the month of August to editor@lakeclaire.org, by July 15. Please help us make this feature inclusive of our LC 'hood.

Heads up, Lake Claire: Two Copperheads spotted in the last few days:

one in Deepdene and the other on the North Ponce running trail.

They're also the most likely snake to bite, although their venom is relatively mild, and their bites are rarely fatal for humans. Copperheads can sometimes be found in wood and sawdust piles, and construction areas. They often seek shelter under surface cover such as boards, sheet metal, logs, or large flat rocks. Just be aware when you and doggies are walking in the neighborhood.