



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **BABY BOOMERS, STORM SURVIVORS, BUSINESS OWNERS SHOWCASE SOLAR TECHNOLOGY IN UPCOMING NATIONAL SOLAR TOUR**

#### **Thousands of Solar Buildings open for public tours across the country and in *Flagstaff***

On Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup> thousands of solar-powered homes and buildings in 44 states will be open for public tours as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> annual American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour. Locally, the tour will begin at Willow Bend Center for Environmental Education located at 703 Sawmill Road. The tour will be from 9am to 5pm but Willow Bend will close at 1pm. Maps and descriptions of the homes will be available at Willow Bend. The National Solar Tour offers Americans an opportunity to see how their neighbors are putting reliable solar power and other energy efficient technologies to work. Interest in solar power has increased dramatically in the wake of escalating fuel costs, devastating weather and growing concerns over energy security.

#### ***The Flagstaff Tour***

Willow Bend is heated passively by the sun. The first winter in operation less than 1/8 cord of wood was used as auxiliary heat. Willow Bend will soon have a wind generator to produce electricity for lighting, computers, etc.

This year the tour has become a part of the Festival of Science.

Most of the other homes are also heated by the sun, either directly or indirectly. Some use photovoltaics to generate electricity for use in the house.

#### ***Selected National Tours***

Following hurricane Katrina, portable solar power was used to get the St. Bernard Port, Harbor & Terminal District back up and running. A portable solar array was used to power computers and keep the lights on in trailers that housed temporary headquarters, allowing the port to off load much needed materials and supplies for hurricane and flood relief efforts. In the months following the hurricane, the portable solar array was moved

around the port to provide power to commercial tenants trying to get their businesses back on track. The solar equipment used during the aftermath of the devastating storm will be on display near the convention center in downtown Little Rock Arkansas during the National Solar Tour.

The organizer of the National Solar Tour in Baton Rouge, Louisiana provided shelter for 10 friends and neighbors during and following Hurricane Katrina. While power was out throughout the area, solar power kept his lights on, fans and refrigerator running and provided power to watch TV news updates about the storm and flooding. His home will be on the Tour as will several others that installed solar power following the storm and flooding.

## ***Solar Trends***

During California's record heat wave in July families using solar power helped keep the grid up and running by providing their surplus energy to the utility grid. One family's solar panels and wind turbine produced enough energy for their home and for their neighbors. Through net metering they gave back power to the electric grid during the biggest time of need.

Across the nation an increasing number of baby boomers and retirees are adding solar power and sustainable energy systems to their homes. These environmentally aware consumers report that solar provides peace of mind because costs are fixed and because solar provides an uninterrupted energy supply even in severe weather, an important consideration for those who rely on electricity to power medical equipment. Many homes owned by baby boomers and retirees will be featured on the Tour.

An increasing number of businesses and recreational facilities are turning to solar power. The buildings open to the public during the National Solar Tour include a golf course, a bowling alley and many homes, businesses and schools.

Attendance to the National Solar Tour has grown substantially in recent years, attracting tens of thousands of visitors. Many who learn about solar power during the tour go on to install solar and other energy efficient technologies in their own homes and businesses.

## ***Additional Information***

This year marks the eleventh anniversary of the National Solar Tour. The event has grown to include open-house tours in nearly every state in the country. The theme of this year's tour is *Real Places for Real People*. It offers the public an opportunity to tour solar homes and buildings in their own communities, speak with homeowners and experts, and learn how the technology works, what it costs, and why it makes sense. To find a solar tour near you, please visit <http://www.nationalsolartour.org>. Coconino County and the City of Flagstaff jointly run the Coconino County Sustainable Building Program. Visit <http://www.coconino.az.gov/comdev.aspx?id=148> or call Sonya Malkhassian at (928) 226-2736 for more information

**Note to Editors:** Many of the people with buildings on the National Solar Tour are willing to open their homes and businesses to media for tours prior to the public open house. Please contact your local organizer, Ed Dunn at (928) 774 6308 to make arrangements.