



Green

USING THE SUN TO TURN POOLS GREEN

By **BERNADETTE STARZEE**

Long Island is home to about 110,000 in-ground swimming pools. Environmental activists, along with companies that provide solar pool-heating systems, see in pools a largely untapped opportunity for using the sun's energy to reduce carbon emissions and residents' heating costs.

Solar pool-heating systems reduce energy costs by \$500 to \$3,700 per year versus a traditional heater, depending on the pool size and type of heater being replaced, according to Sunshine Solar Technologies, a Jericho-based pool heating company.

According to President Kevin Wert, the average solar system costs about \$5,500 to install vs. just under \$5,000 for an average heat pump. However, Wert pointed out, home owners get their money back within one to two years in energy savings.

To install a solar heating system, Sunshine Solar Technologies uses an existing pool pump to circulate water to the solar collectors, which are usually mounted on the roof but can also be placed on a rack on the ground. The pool water enters the solar collectors from the bottom and, as it passes through tubes to the top, it is warmed by the sun. It is then fed back to the pool.

According to the company, a solar heating system will make a pool 10 to 20 degrees warmer than an unheated pool from May to September in the Northeast. "We have good solar exposure on Long Island," Wert said. "We don't have a tremendous amount of mature

trees, like in Westchester and Connecticut."

However, Wert acknowledged, solar heating systems have two major drawbacks. For starters, the sun is not a consistent heat source. "The system doesn't work at night, when it's raining or when there are thick storm clouds," he said.

Second, the system cannot be installed on every property. "There has to be enough space," Wert said. "And the property must have a southern, eastern or western exposure."

GreenLogic Energy, based in Southampton, offers a different type of solar solution to heat pools. The company installs a small solar-electric system, which uses the sun's energy to power an electric heat pump, eliminating carbon emissions and heating costs. The system, after tax credits and rebates, starts at about \$5,000, which is in addition to an electric heat pump, said J.P. Cléjan, a senior energy consultant in GreenLogic's Roslyn Heights office.

"Unlike a solar heating system, this type of system offers precise temperature control regardless of the weather," Cléjan said. "The solar electric system produces electricity on a year-round basis, which is used as needed by the heat pump."

According to Cléjan, about a quarter of GreenLogic's customers never had a pool heater before. "They didn't want to pay the costs associated with heating a pool, or to harm the environment," he said.

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