

Local electrical contractor goes solar

By Myrna Fearer/Danvers Herald

Wed Feb 27, 2008, 07:36 PM EST



DANVERS - In the interest of conserving energy and helping save the world for future generations, green is now the prominent color at Allain & Son Electrical Contractors, where the family-owned company is going solar.

After 65 years in a traditional electric contracting business that is into its fourth generation, the father-and-son team of Al and Jason Allain has added a Solar Energy Division at its Rainbow Terrace location. The team made the formal announcement at the North Shore Business Expo at the Sheraton Ferncroft, where they exhibited some of their new solar products.

“We’re pushing conservation first,” Al Allain said of the primary reason for the decision.

“Everybody wants to help the next generation,” Jason Allain said.

Al Allain has actually been watching the evolution of solar energy for more than a decade before deciding now was the time to go for it.

“I’ve been keeping an eye on it for years,” Al Allain said. Now the picture has changed, Allain said.

“The easiest way to transport energy is through wires,” he said. The sun is the best possible source of energy, and it is always there. But, until the last few years, energy costs were more manageable; gas and oil weren’t as high and the technology hadn’t been quite as refined or as easy to access. One of the largest manufacturers of solar energy equipment is right here in Massachusetts, at the former Army base, Fort Devens.

“The newer technology they have today makes sense,” Jason Allain added. “It’s more available and feasibly economical. Since coming into the family business over 14 years ago, I have seen many things and new ideas on saving energy. Now there is the technology that brings the sun into the energy category that does not cost any money; the sun is free and has been warming our planet long before any houses were built.”

“Oil is much too precious to burn,” Al Allain said. “Were running out of energy. The state and federal government are pushing solar energy. They’re offering substantial rebates.”

Allain is passionate about the subject, said his wife, Diane. It’s something anyone immediately discovers when listening to Al Allain speak about solar energy.

“All energy come from the sun,” he said.

To Allain, going solar is a no-brainer, not when he compares the cost of energy, which is always going to increase, to solar energy, which is going to cost the homeowner or business very little once the equipment is paid off, especially with rebates as an added incentive.

“You’ve got a house, you need this much to run it,” he said, gesturing with his hands. “Costs continue to rise at rapid rates. You can go the other way with solar, which will always be there and it will always cost less and less.”

But before anyone goes solar, the Allains suggest the consumer opt for an energy audit done with a thermal imaging camera. Experts from the company can assess any areas of heat loss. Correcting some of these leaks may translate into fewer solar modules that have to be installed.

Since this is a new product for the company, the entire crew went to school Jason Allain said.

Now, they’re ready to roll with the first customer, who just happens to be Al and Diane Allain. They’re going to be installing a solar water heating system.

“I can hardly wait,” said Diane Allain, who uses cold water to wash clothes as one of the ways to conserve energy. With the new solar system, though, she won’t have to feel guilty about taking long hot showers or running the dishwasher. “I’m doing my own little part in saving the world. It will be working for the environment and working for me. It’s coming back and giving back. What’s wrong with that?”

“It’s a benefit to all,” Al Allain said. “Technology has changed. Efficiency has changed. Costs keep going up. Yet the sun doesn’t cost anymore than when my father was around. We have to harness the sun’s energy.”

For more information about going solar, contact Allain & Son Electrical Contractor at 10R Rainbow Terrace, 978-777-4633.