

Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital goes green to reduce energy use

During a short ceremony held at Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital on September 23, Gene Curtis from Focus on Energy presented Bill Sexton, Chief Executive Officer, and Ken Pankow, Facilities Director, a giant check for \$60,936.25, symbolizing a Focus on Energy Cash Back Reward awarded to the hospital for new environmentally friendly features reducing energy demand. In addition to hospital employees, Charlie Connell a member of the Hospital Board of Directors and Building and Grounds Committee, and Prairie du Chien Mayor Dave Hemmer attended the presentation.

“As part of the community we wanted to be a leader in conservation and energy,” said Bill Sexton. “Both the staff and patients are more environmentally conscious in the way we dispose of items and use our resources.”

Ken Pankow and Kurt Hutter and Chris Collins, H&H Solar Energy Services, explained the solar project that took a year and a half to complete to provide energy and heat water. H&H Solar Energy Services mounted 42 AET 4' x 10' solar thermal collectors on flashed roof curbs at the hospital. Twenty-four collectors deliver domestic hot water to the facility, while 18 provide hot water to the Laundry Department. The 24 collector array will provide an average of 900 to 1,200 gallons of hot water per day, stored in three 318 gallon solar storage tanks. The 18 panel array serves two 318 gallon storage tanks and will produce an estimated 600 to 900 gallons of hot water per day. In addition to the rebate, the overall system is eligible for a Federal Tax Credit.

“Installing solar panels required proper understanding of the mechanical engineering issues of the hospital system. The facility uses a great deal of hot water to complete the simplest tasks like hand washing to the large volume of laundry washed every day,” Pankow said. “One of the advantages of using renewable energy is that we use energy in such abundance twenty-four hours a day that renewables can make financial sense. In addition to the solar project, the Maintenance Department also switched many of the toilets to water-saving models, and built heating, ventilation and air conditioning and water systems to recapture lost energy.”

The rows of large, rectangular solar panels projecting from the roof have altered the hospital’s appearance and generated a variety of responses from the community. “Some people have stopped in and congratulated us, while others have commented that the facility looks different now that we put up the solar panels, and they sure hope the wind doesn’t blow them away,” Bill Sexton says with a smile.



Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital was presented an oversized check for nearly \$61,000, a cash back reward for the hospital’s new efforts to reduce energy use. From left: Bill Sexton, CEO; Terri Achenbach, Maintenance; Charlie Connell, Board of Directors/ Building and Grounds Committee; Ken Pankow, Facilities Director; Tom Hemmer, Maintenance; Gene Curtis, Focus on Energy; Prairie du Chien Mayor Dave Hemmer; Kurt Hutter, Chris Collins, H&H Solar Energy Services; Duane Nagle, Maintenance; and Connie Achenbach, COO, Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital.



The hospital has been nationally recognized for its renovations to increase energy efficiency. This photo shows some of the solar thermal collectors installed on the roof of the Obstetrics and Surgical wing of the facility. Collectors were also installed on the roof of the ER/Rehab wing. The hospital will see payback on the project within 10 years.



Mr. Sexton predicts Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital will see the payback on renovations within 10 years due to increased energy efficiency. And in response to the national discussion on renewable resources, more funding opportunities are available for green projects now than ever.

“We need to be proactive about the future of the hospital. Where do we need to be in 10 or 20 years to meet the healthcare needs of area communities?” Sexton asks. “That’s what we’re looking at now. We have recently initiated a master facility planning process. Prairie du Chien Memorial has recently engaged the services of an architectural and planning firm to help us do just that.”

Mr. Sexton also announced that the hospital is looking at criteria for LEED gold certification. LEED (Leadership

in Energy and Environmental Design) is an internationally recognized green building certification process providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO₂, emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

For other facilities brainstorming ways to be environmentally conscious and reduce energy costs, Mr. Sexton recommends considering natural resources. “It depends on the area of the country,” he explains. “In some areas, solar energy is more efficient than others. In some areas, you could recapture wind energy. The Obama Administration is very focused on energy conservation, so there are grants and rebates available. It makes it a great time and opportunity to be moving forward with these projects.”