

Local businesses get help with energy projects

Wednesday, September 10, 2008 2:19 PM EDT

By Morning Journal Staff

OBERLIN - Two area businesses will receive federal grants to help pay for alternative energy projects.

Green Circle Growers Inc. will receive \$227,500 toward a new retractable energy curtain to reduce energy use by 43 percent. PPI Properties LLC of Milan will use \$23,712 to help pay for solar panels for its tenant, Precision Paving Inc.

The money comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Grant program, which aims to provide money for farmers and rural businesses.

Area businesses get federal energy grants

Thursday, September 11, 2008 1:43 AM EDT

By RICHARD PAYERCHIN

MILAN TOWNSHIP — Two area businesses will get federal grants to pay for upgrades that will cut energy costs.

Green Circle Growers Inc., of rural Oberlin, and PPI Properties LLC, of Milan Township, will get money through the federal Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Grant program, administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development division. Green Circle Growers will use \$227,500 to install a retractable energy curtain in its greenhouse to reduce energy usage by 43 percent.

"It will help them regulate the temperature of their greenhouse," said Michael Jones, spokesman for the USDA Rural Development office in Columbus. "It'll pay for itself no problem."

PPI Properties LLC, which manages the headquarters of Precision Paving Inc., will receive \$23,712 to pay for solar panels that will generate up to 10 kilowatts.

"Hopefully, it's doing a small, tiny part to help with overall energy usage and the green thing," said Matt Kluding, co-owner of Precision Paving and managing member of PPI Properties LLC. "It says to people, we can do this," Kluding said. "If 20 other people can do it, the impact is greater."

The government grants and tax incentives are a boon for businesses considering alternative energy sources, Kluding said. Many businesses are looking for ways to increase efficiency or cut energy use.

However, alternative energy technology such as wind turbines or solar panels are expensive to install. Not all companies want to change their energy plan if the technology has a long payback period in a tough economy. "We're willing to take that risk because it's the right thing to do," Kluding said.

The money comes from USDA as part of the federal farm bill, said Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo. Northern Ohio farmers should consider the grant and loan program as an economic development tool, Kaptur said. The bill has more than \$1 billion

of grants, loans and incentives to spark new energy production through agriculture and rural businesses, she said.

"For many decades, agriculture in the United States was often referred to in three categories: food, fiber and forestry," Kaptur said. "For many years, I have been trying to add a fourth word to agriculture: Fuel.

On the local level, the roof on PPI Properties' building does not have the proper angle or peak to hold the solar panels. Those will be installed on a lean-to structure outside the shop, Kluding said.

For a year, Northern Ohio averages about four hours per day of usable sunlight, Kluding said. He and co-owners Mike Kegarise and Jeff Crecelius considered installing a wind turbine but found with solar power they would not have to contend with issues such as turbine maintenance and possible building height restrictions.

"Our investigation that was done for us with wind found it just didn't seem as feasible or cost effective for us at the time," Kluding said. The 52 solar panels will cost about \$95,000 total, with a state grant covering about \$36,000 of the cost, Kluding said. Working with Edison Solar & Wind Ltd. of Milan, they hope to install the panels by November.

It will be the largest spread of solar panels from Oberlin to Toledo, said David Miller of Edison Solar & Wind.

The loans and grants are competitive on a national basis. More information about the program is available by calling Randy Monhemius, business program specialist at the USDA Rural Development office in Columbus at (614) 255-2424.

Shining light on environmental issue Precision Paving in Milan to produce solar energy as early as November

By **AARON KRAUSE - Reflector Staff Writer** | Friday September 12 2008, 6:13pm

MILAN - Precision Paving is trying to do its part to prevent carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

The Milan asphalt paving company has received state and federal grants totaling about \$60,000 toward its efforts to produce solar energy, or energy from the sun.

The roughly \$95,000 project involves the installation of 52 panels. The system will produce about 11,000 watts of electricity, making it the largest solar array in North Central Ohio, said David Miller, owner of Edison Solar & Wind LTD. The Milan company will be installing the system and Precision Paving will foot the rest of the cost.

The array, which will produce about 15-percent of Precision Paving's electricity needs, should be producing solar power by November, Miller said.

He said the panels will prevent 14,600 tons of carbon dioxide a year from entering the atmosphere a figure that comes from Green Energy Ohio, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting environmentally and economically sustainable energy policies and practices in the state. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, an excess of which could raise the earth's temperature to dangerous levels.

Miller commended Precision Paving for taking on the solar project. "Here you've got a company, they could probably use some new equipment, they could retire debt (or) they could give themselves a raise," he said. "There's lots of things they could do with that money that could make them more money. "I think they deserve the highest amount of adoration from the citizens for doing something beneficial to all the rest of us."

Precision Paving has been in business since 2002 and currently has about 30 employees. Matt Kluding, one of three owners of Precision Paving, said the grants are vital to the project. "Without the grant I could not afford to move forward," he said. "I needed every bit of the money."

Kluding said he expects the company's investment to be paid back in energy savings within nine years. Any electricity the company does not use will roll back to the meter, Kluding added.

The life expectancy of the solar panels is at least 25 years, Miller said.

"I feel like long-term I'm doing good things for my company," Kluding said. "It's going to be more valuable every year in producing electricity. "If we can make this commitment, maybe other people will do the same."

Miller said he is committed to seeing the project through. "We've got a huge amount of intense work to do in the next six weeks to make it a reality but we're going to do it," he said. "We're going to get this job done."

Precision Paving excels through workmanship, outstanding quality

Wednesday, November 19, 2008 8:46 AM EST

By RICHARD PAYERCHIN

MILAN TOWNSHIP — A culture of quality workmanship in a local paving company has led to growth even as less asphalt goes down on the ground.

Precision Paving Inc., 3414 SR 113 East, Milan Township, won its first Golden 30 Award in 2007, the first year the company had five years of business data compiled. This year partners Jeff Crecelius, Mike Kegarise and Matt Kluding take home the company's second Golden 30 Award as an emerging company. This is the 11th year for Golden 30 awards which honors top businesses in Lorain, Erie and Huron counties.

For 2008, the three, and their crew of about 33 workers, remain committed to their goal: "Workmanship with uncompromising quality."

"I think the key, what started us out and what brought our name to be what it is, is quality, and how we present ourselves to people," Kegarise said. "The a huge key: How we treat our customers, and the quality."

Despite a shrinking pool of available work, Precision Paving has grown this year largely due to repeat business and seeking new jobs. The company takes jobs from private driveways to state highways and will bid on 1,000 or more jobs a year.

"I just think that our past, the way we've done dealings in the past with people we work with, we've done well with them and we've done well by them," Crecelius said. "We try and do what's right for the customer as much as possible without hurting ourselves. They like our work, they like our quality, they like the way we deal with them."

The partners also hope to create an atmosphere of innovation, responsibility and opportunity for their employees. "The most important fact is we have what I consider some of the best employees in our industry," Kluding said.

"We have very low turnover and many of our employees have the same kind of attitude that we have as owners. It's all part of one big goal of doing things the right way, treating people right," Kluding said.

Precision Paving has worked on the street resurfacing programs in Amherst, Avon Lake, Norwalk and Sandusky. The company generally works in the region between Cleveland, Toledo and Mansfield.

It also is the area where they grew up and hope to stay. Kluding is a Norwalk native, while Kegarise and Crecelius hail from the Milan area. "This is our backyard," Kluding said. "Lorain, Erie, Huron counties have been good to us. This is where we want to be."

This year Precision Paving resurfaced the quarter-mile drag strip of Summit Motorsports Park in Norwalk. It was a challenging job that started when the races ended on Sunday, and had to be done before the next race the following Friday. The paving also had to be precise in its size, fit and compaction.

"It's fun to know that your watching ESPN and your track's on TV," Kluding said. "We're very proud to be affiliated with them."

Precision Paving is headquartered in a 10,000-square-foot building split between offices and a four-bay maintenance shop for its fleet of about 30 trucks, pavers, rollers, bulldozers and other gear needed for construction.

The company is installing 52 solar panels, paid for in part with money from the federal Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Grant program, which is administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development division.

The solar panels will be the largest spread between Oberlin and Toledo and will power its headquarters.

"It's nice to make this kind of investment in these tough times," Kluding said. "We feel it's the right thing to do. It will bring us some energy savings down the road."

Company unveils solar panels to cut power usage

Saturday, December 20, 2008 1:20 AM EST

By RICHARD PAYERCHIN

MILAN TOWNSHIP — The power of the sun soon will provide electricity for a local company whose new solar panels are the largest array between Oberlin and Toledo.

Business leaders, local officials and the staff of Precision Paving Inc. gathered yesterday to throw the switch for new solar panels that will supply up to 18 percent of the paving company's power needs.

"It's a win-win," said Precision Paving co-owner Matt Kluding. "It will help us long-term save money around here. It will help the environment."

To explain the project, Kluding was flanked by co-owners Jeff Crecelius and Mike Kegarise, project engineer Carl W. Scheutzow of Mariner Energy Systems LLC and consultant David Miller, owner of Edison Solar & Wind Ltd. of Milan.

In an ironic twist, the group did most of their speaking by candlelight. Due to yesterday's inclement weather, the solar panels were covered with sheets of ice, the sky was cloudy and electrical power was knocked out for the area around Precision

Paving's headquarters in Milan Township. The weather did not dampen their enthusiasm about the 52 panels, which sit atop a wooden frame on the building's south side.

The panels weigh more than a ton and are tilted at a 33 degree angle to catch the sunlight, Kegarise said.

The \$95,000 project was paid for with \$59,000 in state and federal grants and \$36,000 in private financing. Kluding praised National City Bank for its willingness to help cover the cost.

The panels have an estimated payback time of eight to 10 years but could last 20 years or more.

The solar project appears to be the first of its scale in Erie County, Miller said.

Several speakers also compared the company's project to the inventive spirit of Thomas A. Edison, Milan's most famous native son.

"They are pioneers following in the tradition of Edison, showing that the future can be better than the past, and it's based on invention," said U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo, who helped the company acquire grant money through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program.

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