

Cabrillo's Green Technology Center opens

Cabrillo College
Building sits on former public library site

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By TODD GUILD

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WATSONVILLE — Watsonville is getting greener — thanks to Cabrillo College's Solari Green Technology Center, which opened its doors to the community Friday.

The new building will house the college's Construction and Energy Management program, which teaches students sustainable building techniques, including solar and thermal sustainable building design and installation and renewable energy.

The event was attended by officials from Cabrillo, Watsonville and Santa Cruz County, some of whom spoke of the building process and expounded on the benefits to the community.

Perhaps the most visible attendees, however, were the current students and graduates of the program, who came dressed in the dark green shirts emblazoned with the name of the program.

Suzanne Wilson, 47, said she left a career in sales to join the program. She earned

an associate in science degree in construction energy management in summer 2011, and has kept taking classes to enhance her skill base.

She said she plans on using her skills to be a liaison between homeowners wanting to add energy efficient elements and the contractors.

"I especially loved the fact that all the teachers are involved in the field," she said.

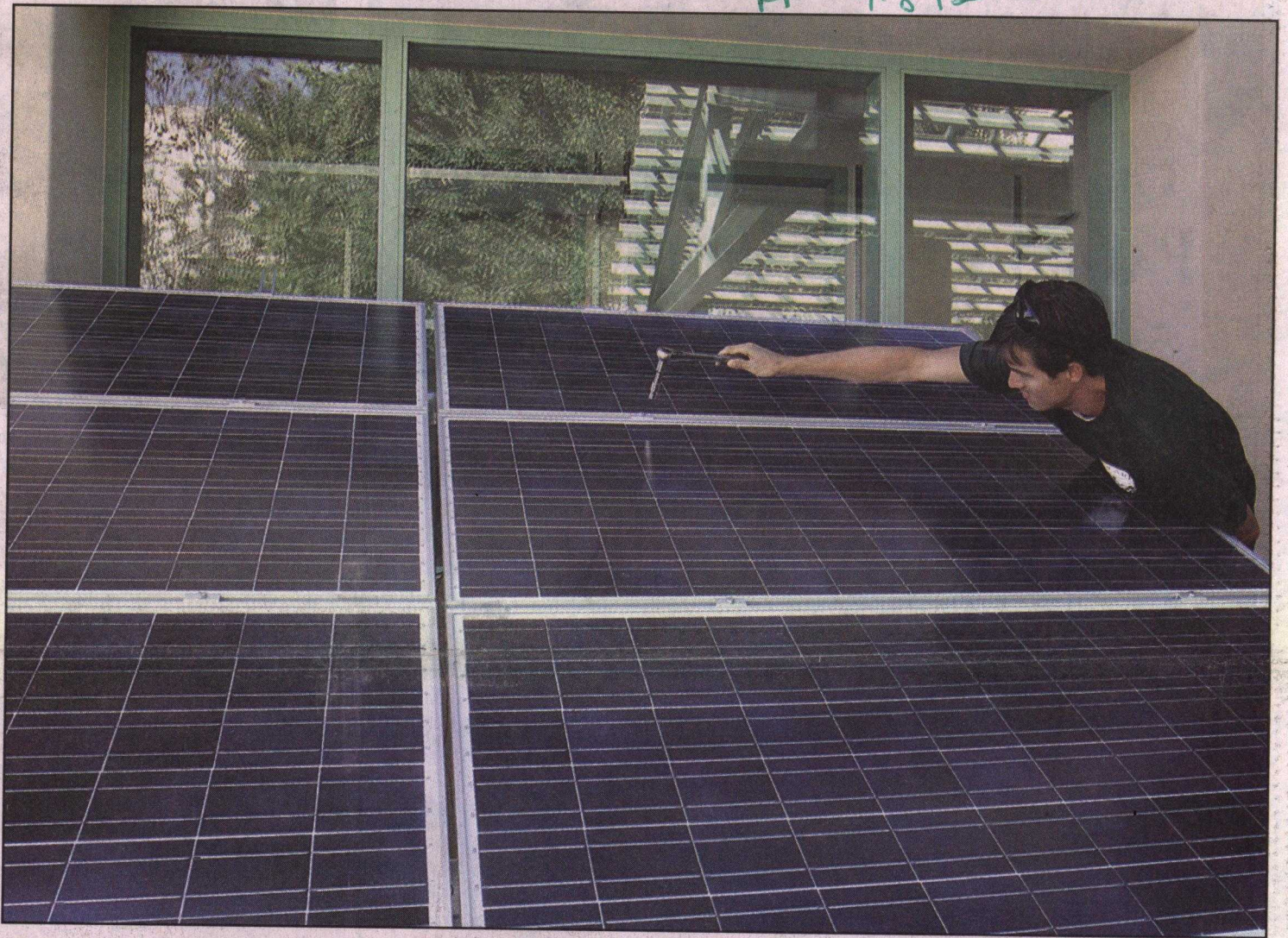
Anthony Sosa, 31, of Watsonville, is poised to graduate in the spring. He said he most recently has worked in the retail industry but has also dabbled in landscaping.

"I wanted a different career," he said. "And I felt like this is a growing industry."

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Alejandro Cerdas works on erecting a solarvoltaic array for a demonstration at the Solari Green Technology Center opening ceremony.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian



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GREEN

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Indeed, instructor Stuart Wadsworth said the solar industry doubled nationwide last year, based on the number of installations.

In addition, home and business owners are turning to energy efficient measures such as solar systems as the cost of materials goes down and technologies improve. Costs have dropped approximately 40 percent in the past two years, Wadsworth said.

"There's a lot of work in the industry," he said. "We've taught tens of thousands of people how to install solar systems."

The new major will be an addition to Cabrillo's construction department, which already offers degrees in construction management and in codes and standards.

Construction on the building began in 2010 on the site of the former Watsonville Public Library, and classes have been held in the building since the fall semester started Aug. 27.

With numerous environmentally friendly features, the building was designed to be certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program, the highest honor that can be given for environmentally friendly building.

LEED certification is said to boost the appeal of businesses and institutions to customers who are looking for environmentally friendly companies.

The windows and walls are angled to gather heat during the cold months and heat the



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Cabrillo College president Brian King (at left) welcomes a large gathering Friday to the grand opening of the new Solari Green Technology Center in Watsonville.

interior of the building, while heat from the summertime sun is reflected away.

Sprawling ceilings allow for airflow, and customized, gel-filled windows allow in light and heat, which is absorbed by dark-colored floors that absorb heat and keep the rooms warmed.

Solar panels on the roofs absorb heat from the sun, which in turn heats water that flows under the floors — a solar thermal radiant floor system that saves the need for expensive furnaces.

The center was also built to be a teaching facility, and students will assist with future construction projects.

Additionally, the control panels for the solar panels and other green technologies, the duct work and a great deal of the wiring is left exposed to act as teaching tools for the students who will be learning how to build similar systems.

Career Education and Economic Development department Dean of Instruction Rock Pfothner said the program is showing strong enrollment, with waiting lists for many classes.

"This building is a realization of the dream of hundreds of people," he said. "To me it exemplifies the kind of spirit it takes to thrive."

The \$10 million project — which includes the purchase of the property — was largely funded through Bond Measure C in 1998 and Bond Measure D in 2004. The center also received \$500,000 in funding from Mary and the late Dick Solari, and \$100,000 from the Les and Jeane Ley Family Fund.

In addition, Cabrillo received three grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration totaling \$3.3 million for the building.