



Your Very Own Solar Home Companion

A Grassroots Guide for Developing Renewable Energy

We've seen incredible change begin as a few people sitting around a picnic table. We believe that by working together as communities, we can run our world on 100% democratic, renewable energy.

Want to join us? Great.

The first thing you should do is host a potluck.

Your Very Own Solar Home Companion
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**This guide is meant to be written in and shared.
If this guide reaches the end of its journey, please recycle. Thanks!**

What is the Solutions Grassroots Tour and why are you having a Solutions Grassroots potluck?

The Solutions Grassroots Tour is a series of music, film and theater events that combine classic storytelling with roll-up-your sleeves, community organizing to look at the deadly impacts of fossil fuel development and provide a vision for developing the alternative – democratic, renewable energy.

More than just a one night event, the Solutions Grassroots Tour is a starting point for neighbors to come together, and start working in teams to get their communities out of the fossil fuel cycle and to build a better future.

Grassroots History

While touring the country with GASLAND and GASLAND PART II, we met thousands of community members who were coming together to stop the fossil fuel industry from destroying their towns.

Our world is at a critical crossroads. We are running out of conventional fossil fuels at a time when science has proven that we need to stop burning them to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Rather than realize the age of fossil fuels is over, the oil, coal and gas industries are charging full steam ahead to develop new sources of fossil fuels that are harder to get to and take more ‘extreme’ methods of extraction.

Fracking for natural gas. Blowing up mountain tops for coal. Destroying the boreal forest to develop tar sands. Criss-crossing our country with pipelines. Running crude-oil bomb trains through our towns.

We can't let the fossil fuel industry build another 50 years of infrastructure and extraction.

We believe one of the most powerful and important tools we all have to stop fossil fuel development and prevent catastrophic climate change is to build the alternative – democratic, renewable energy.

So what does a potluck have to do with this?

We feel a potluck is the perfect setting for people to get together to not only share some food, but share experiences and ideas of how communities can come together to develop democratic, renewable energy. We recommend good music, food and culture as part of our radical plan to save the world.

Inaction is no longer an option. If we want to continue to have a livable earth where we can eat good food and listen to music with our friends we need to change how we power our communities.

Current Energy System

Right now, most Americans are powering their homes with dirty, fossil fuels that are threatening the health of their communities and destroying the planet.

As coal fired power plants shut down the fossil fuel industry is trying to force us to switch to energy sources like fracked natural gas and crude-oil.

They're also lobbying hard to keep renewables from being developed. In Florida for example, it's illegal to be off the grid. It's illegal to completely power your home by solar in the Sunshine State. You also can't talk about climate change if you're a State employee.

So how do we get out of the fossil fuel cycle madness?

We've broken it down into three categories that everyone can do:



Easy: Switch it!

You can stop sending a chunk of your money to the fossil fuel companies every month by switching to a renewable energy provider. Two companies we recommend are Ethical Electric and Community Energy. Why these two? Read our Renewable Energy FAQ on page 8.



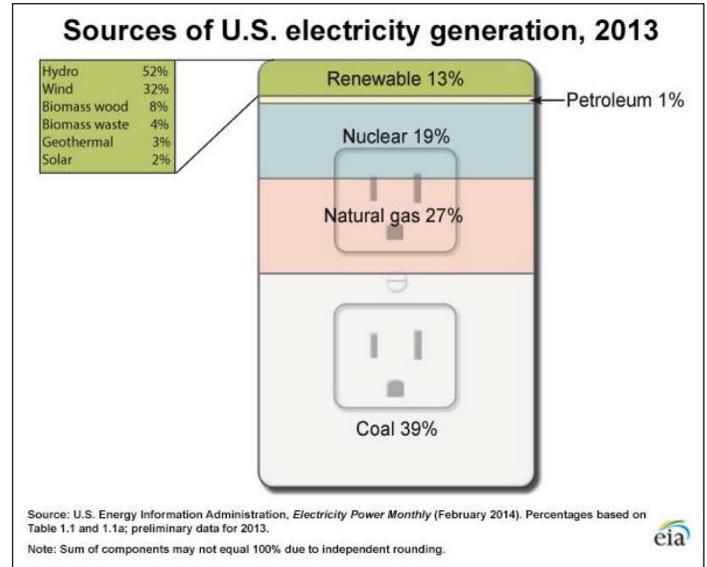
Easy+: Conserve it and make it!

Right now American homes are wasting a lot of energy. We are paying fossil fuel companies for energy we aren't even using. There also are abundant renewable energy sources all around us. Many people can make their own energy through solar panels and small wind, and heat and cool their homes through geothermal.



Hardcore Change the World: Organize it!

And it all comes back to the potluck.



Are you ready to do something to develop renewable energy in your community? If yes, continue on in the guide. We're starting with Hardcore Change the World because there is food involved and we're hungry.

Before Your Potluck

- **Sign up to host a potluck.** Let us know when and where your potluck will be so we can help support you by connecting you to local volunteers from your community, and give you exclusive video content materials shot during the making of Josh Fox's unreleased film on Climate Change.
- **Sign up to host a Solutions Grassroots Potluck:** http://solutionsgrassroots.nationbuilder.com/sg_potluck
- **Invite 5 to 10 friends over for a potluck.** Start with communities you already belong to – friends, family, members of your faith community. Don't worry if they're not 'environmentalists' or fracktivists. Most people want to eat good food and prevent the world from ending.
- **Ask people what food they're going to bring.** By asking people what they're going to bring you kill two birds with one stone. 1. You prevent your potluck from being 10 people who all bring guacamole. And 2. People are more likely to come if they know people are counting on them to bring something. If Jane down the street doesn't bring potato salad, who will?!
- **Follow up with those who have RSVPed with a friendly reminder.** People are busy and a friendly reminder goes a long way. When you call them just say something along the lines of "Hi, just calling to make sure we'll still be seeing you at the potluck this Thursday and you'll be bringing the potato salad. I'm looking forward to it."
- **Ask people to bring their electricity bill to the potluck.** This way they can switch to renewable energy right there that night, and then will be able to show others how to do it.
- **Watch our short film.** Once you've signed up to have a Solutions Grassroots potluck we will send you a link to access a short Solutions Grassroots film with footage shot during Josh Fox's unreleased film on climate change.
- **Read our renewable energy FAQ.** Folks are going to have questions. This guide gives you answers.
- **Get set up to make the switch to renewable energy.** Have your computer on and open to the Solutions Grassroots webpage: www.SolutionsGrassroots.com
- **Print 4 copies of this guide.** One will be yours. There's space at the back for you to take notes. Do so. Three of them you will pass on.

At Your Potluck

- **Greet folks** – Let people know why you invited them over and why building renewable energy in your community is important to you. Have you been fighting fracking or a pipeline in your area? Are you worried about your kids or grandkids future? The most powerful tool we have to fight climate change is your story.
- **Enjoy delicious food** made by your friends and play good music.
- **Have folks go around the table and introduce themselves.**
- **Watch our short film.** Yes you've seen it, but now all your friends need to see it.
- **Start the conversation** about how your community can go 100% renewable. Here's one way...
 - **Flicker the lights:** Ask who wants to do something to make sure the lights in your communities are powered by renewable energy, not coal or fracked gas?
- Then ask if anyone has any ideas about how you can do that.
- **Suggest EASY.** The transformation of our energy system isn't going to happen overnight, but by switching to a renewable energy power supplier we can stop sending money each month to the fossil fuel industry and support the development of renewables.
- When we all switch together we send a strong market signal that we demand the creation of more renewable energy.
- **Lead the way and make the switch.** If you haven't switched yet, lead by example and show your friends how easy it is. You can switch your power provider through Solutions Grassroots.
- **See who else is ready to make the switch.** Folks can make the switch at:
http://solutionsgrassroots.nationbuilder.com/go_renewable
- **Have everyone at the potluck sign up** for Solutions Grassroots updates. You can do that at our website:
<http://solutionsgrassroots.nationbuilder.com/join>
- **Ask who would be willing to host a potluck of their own?** Don't serve dessert until at least 3 folks volunteer to host a potluck of their own. Give them a guide. Print more guides when all 9 of your friends volunteer to host a potluck.

After Your Potluck

- **Follow up with folks.** Continue the conversations that started at the potluck. Get that great recipe for Jane's potato salad. Ask folks who switched at the potluck if they feel good about it? Ask folks who haven't switched where their hesitation comes from.
- **Plan another potluck.** Print 3 more guides. Feel free to write tips, facts, stories, good guacamole recipes, etc. in the guides.
- **Keep inviting folks again and again** until they host their own potlucks and invite you.
- **Invite new folks, too.**

Hardcore Change the World. If you're ready to take the power of grassroots, kitchen democracy to the next level, read on...

More Hardcore Change the World



- **Solar Farms (Community Shared Solar):** Community Solar is a game changer for renewable energy because it allows for folks who can produce more energy than they need to sell it to their neighbors. Right now, in upstate New York, there are many farmers who said no to leasing their land for fracking. Wouldn't it be great if they could lease their land for solar instead?

Our Solar Farms initiative is about identifying potential community solar locations and buyers as well as supporting law changes that would allow for community solar in states where they don't have it or better laws where they exists now.

Community Solar could also be huge in cities for renters or homeowners who are unable to do residential solar.

- **Solar Barns (Stopping Extreme Energy Development):** An inspiring group called Bold Nebraska built a solar powered barn in the path of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. If that pipeline were to be approved the fossil fuel industry would have to tear down the energy of the future to ship the dirty, energy of the past.
- Many of the towns we've been to are facing devastating fossil fuel infrastructure projects. Our Solar Barns initiative is about finding creative ways to stop these projects and show that these towns are demanding renewables, not more fossil fuel development.
- **Solar Bars (Getting local businesses on board):** Where you meet matters. Breweries, wineries and restaurants have been some of our closest allies and are great spots for folks to get together for organizing meetings. Our Solar Bar initiative aims to get local businesses to go 100% renewable and agree to be meeting places for community organizing.
- **Holy Solar (Getting local faith communities on board):** Many grassroots movements across history have had strong ties to faith communities. The movement to transition our world from dirty fossil fuel to clean, democratic renewable energy will be no different. Our Holy Solar initiative works with faith communities to help their membership switch to renewable energy suppliers and to get faith builds such as churches, temples, etc to go solar.
- **Solutions Grassroots Touring Circuit:** We've toured to over 350 towns across the country. In everyone of those towns we've met powerful citizens who are working hard to educate and organize their community. We want to give folks access to our new films, other people's films and great musical acts so they can use these events to educate and organize to stop fossil fuels by developing and demanding renewable energy. We've seen the alternative – communities devastated by fracking, offshore drilling, tar sands development for crude-oil and mountaintop removal. Our goal is for every town in this country to be safe from extreme energy development and climate change and be thriving, powered by 100% renewable energy.
To become a stop on the Solutions Grassroots Touring Circuit, please fill out the form located at: http://solutionsgrassroots.nationbuilder.com/solutions_grassroots_circuit
- To get involved in any of these initiatives, please email our Grassroots Coordinator Lee at lee@solutionsgrassroots.com.

Renewables FAQ



Switch it!

What does it mean to ‘switch’ to renewable energy?

Mostly likely you get your electricity from your local utility. (ConEd, National Grid, PP&L, etc.). What most people don’t know is that you have a choice. An Energy Service Company (ESCOs) is a company that supplies electricity that your local utility distributes to your home.

With the deregulation of the energy market in many states there are now dozens of ESCOs to choose from. Some offer your basic dirty fossil fuels. Others claim that they supply clean energy, but are really just supplying gas and/or RECs, (Renewable Energy Certificates). RECs are financial derivatives that your utility buys from non-local wind farms so that it can satisfy its Renewable Portfolio Standard. In short, RECs are doing little to nothing to develop local renewable energy. For more information on RECs, visit www.epa.gov/greenpower/gpmarket/rec.htm.

So which ESCO should I choose?

We recommend:

- Ethical Electric: <https://ethicalelectric.com/Partners/SolutionsGrassroots#>
- Community Energy: <http://www.communityenergyinc.com/solutionsgrassroots>

Why do we recommend Ethical Electric and Community Energy?

- They supply 100% renewable energy. No greenwashing here.
- We know and trust their founders. They are movement people.
- They try to source their renewable energy as locally as possible.

When you switch to Ethical or Community you’ll still get your same electricity bill in the mail each month. You’ll still pay the delivery portion of the bill to your local utility but the supply portion will now go to buying 100% renewable energy.

Do I have to own a home to switch?

Nope! Folks who live in apartments can switch too. As long as you pay your electricity bill you can switch.

Do all utilities offer Ethical Electric and Community Energy?

Sadly, no. If your utility is a co-op, or the companies have not launched their programs in your state or region as of yet, then you and your community cannot switch (at the moment).

To see what utilities Ethical Electric serves, visit <https://ethicalelectric.com/howitworks/faq>.

To see if Community Energy is in your area, visit <http://www.communityenergyinc.com/your-home>.

Will it cost me more to buy renewable energy?

It depends. It’s generally the same price, but just to be safe, be prepared to pay \$10 more per month.

ESCOs are subject to the same market variability as your current utility. Electricity is generally bought in an open, wholesale market. When demand is high in the winter and summer when folks are using lots of energy to heat and cool their homes, prices go up across the board.

Solar and wind energy do tend to be slightly more expensive but our renewable energy partners are committed to providing you the most affordable renewable energy.

Right now Natural Gas is the most volatile commodity in the open energy market. Building more wind and solar is helping to drive down costs,¹ so when you switch to renewable energy, you're helping make wind and solar cheaper!

What about Hydro?

Hydro is the cheapest form of energy on the open market. Some ESCOs that claim to be providing 100% renewable energy have a large percentage of hydro in the energy mix they are selling you. They might be cheaper than the ESCOs that supply 100% wind and solar, but the companies offering mostly hydro are doing very little to support new renewable energy development.

What's the difference between a variable and a fixed rate?

A variable rate is subject to the open market and varies month to month.

A fixed rate is locked in so you pay the same rate each month. A fixed rate insulates you from market variability when electricity costs are very high in the winter and summer.

Is Solutions Grassroots making money off of people switching?

Yes and we believe that local, grassroots groups and individuals should too. The switch from fossil fuels to renewables will be a tremendous economic generator. We believe that local communities should be the ones who benefit from this economic boom.

Every time someone switches to Ethical Electric or Community Energy we get a referral. We can give you your own Solutions Grassroots personalized URL to sign folks up. If you sign someone up for Ethical Electric through your own PURL (Personalized URL) we will send you \$50. If you sign someone up with your PURL for Community Energy, we will send you \$20.

So for example, every time someone switches we get \$75. If you use your own personalized URL to sign folks up, we'll send \$50 back to you.

We recommend using that money to support the movement to develop democratic, renewable energy. We'll be using our chunk to develop more resources to support you!

Why should I switch through Solutions Grassroots?

By switching through Solutions Grassroots you are joining hundreds of people who are declaring "No more dangerous fossil fuel development, we demand renewables!" We can help connect you to hundreds of local grassroots groups all over the country that are leading the way to the renewable energy future.

We're also committed to using our portion of the referral money to strengthen our grassroots networks and provide tools like new films that can help educate and mobilize the masses.

How do I get my own personalized URL to refer folks?

Email Lee at lee@solutionsgrassroots.com.

1 http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/24/business/energy-environment/solar-and-wind-energy-start-to-win-on-price-vs-conventional-fuels.html?_r=0



Conserve it and make it!

What does it mean to conserve energy?

In a nutshell, this means use less energy. By rendering your home more energy efficient, your home will use 20-30% less energy, and you will save, on average \$750 per year¹.

Many states have incentives right now for folks to get free energy audits of their homes to find out where they're losing energy. There are also low-finance loans available for people to make energy efficiencies upgrades to their homes.

What does it mean to make energy?

Through solar panels, battery back-up systems and small wind there are a variety of ways you can start generating energy at your home.

What about heating?

Geothermal is a great option for cooling and heating your home. Geothermal heat pumps use heat trapped in the ground to heat and cool your home. Here's a video² to learn more about how it works.

Isn't all this expensive?

Installing solar, small wind and geothermal has never been more affordable.

For solar panels and small wind there are many no money down options including loans, leases and power purchasing agreements. Local installers we recommend will work with you to determine what the best financing option is for your home.

How do I find an installer that's right for me?

To get started, email lee@solutionsgrassroots.com. We'll connect you with vetted local providers who can help you find the renewable energy solutions that best fit your lifestyle.

Can I help others get renewables for their homes and businesses?

Yes! We can give you a Personal URL to sign up interested folks. We'll reach out to them and help them realize their renewable energy lifestyle vision. Also... YOU'LL GET PAID a referral reward for introducing us! We believe the renewable energy revolution should benefit everyone and the great news is that it can!

1 <http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/local/topics/residential.html>

2 <http://energy.gov/videos/energy-101-geothermal-heat-pumps>

