

# Solar Services brings mammoth bills down to size

By **Rita Frankenberg**  
The Virginian-Pilot

Last year's Homearama in Chesapeake featured 17 mammoth homes, ranging in size from 3,500 square feet to 9,500 square feet.

The dimensions of the homes astounded Richard Good, president of Solar Services in Lynnhaven.

He stopped in at each of the showcase homes and asked what prospective owners could expect to pay for electricity each month.

"The lowest figure was going to be about \$700 and the highest was about \$1,500," Good said. "That's a mortgage for a lot of people."

This year, Good's company installed the solar panels on The Mothership, the "green" showcase home at the October event at Ashville Park in Virginia Beach.

Built by Chuck Miller of Miller Custom Homes in Pungo, The Mothership is the second earth-friendly Homearama entry.

Last year, Miller built a green home at the event as



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**Richard Good owns Solar Services, which put solar panels on this Homearama house at Ashville Park.**

well. That home sold before the event started, twice. After a contingency caused the first buyer to fall through, another was waiting in the wings.

Buyers were likely intrigued by Miller's guarantee that came with the home. He promised potential buyers that they wouldn't spend more than \$92 a month, to heat and cool the 5,350-square-foot home.

That's because of the efficiency of some of the green elements he incorporated into the home – such as the geo-thermal HVAC system and the spray

polyurethane foam insulation.

And this year, he's gone a step further and added more earth-friendly features.

Not only does he guarantee the homeowner will pay no more than \$115 a month to heat and cool the 6,571-square-foot home, he said the homeowner will actually be able to sell energy back to the power company.

It's all thanks to the energy provided by the home's 16 photovoltaic solar panels.

"It's a much more efficient heating and cooling system,"

## going?

**What** Tidewater Builder Association's Homearama 2008

**When** Oct. 3 - 19; exhibit hours are from noon to 9 p.m. Sunday - Thursday and from noon to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

**Where** The Wilshire Village at Ashville Park, Virginia Beach

**Cost** General admission is \$10 for a one-day pass and \$17 for a two-day pass. Military guests and seniors (over 55) get a \$2 discount. Children 12 and under, and guests in wheelchairs are free.

**Info** For details and a discount coupon, visit [www.homearama.tv](http://www.homearama.tv).

Miller said. "People are tired of paying big energy bills."

Miller said although home construction may be slow, he's retrofitting area homes with environmentally friendly and efficient technologies.

Tankless water heaters, spray polyurethane foam insulation and fluorescent lighting are some of the green elements residents are adding to their

homes these days, Miller said.

For homeowners looking for a quick financial return on their investment, Good said they should start by adding a solar water heater.

"It's the No. 1 home improvement, followed by kitchen upgrades," Good said. Some states offer tax credits for adding green technologies to homes, and there are federal ones, too.

Good said homeowners can visit [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org) to research tax breaks.

Because hot water is one of the biggest consumers of energy, Good said most homeowners will see a return on solar water heater in about six years.

There's another catch with solar electric systems. Homes have to sit in a fairly sunny location.

In the end, Miller said, the high cost of energy these days may be good for the environment.

"It's raising awareness," Miller said. "We need to live more conservatively."

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