



**January 2022 Newsletter**

**Empowering Sustainable Communities**

**A Message from the Outreach Circle**

*Happy New Year*

**Welcome, 2022!**

We at SEEDS send our warmest sentiments as you welcome the new year! We look forward with excitement and focus as we work to extend sustainability deeper in our local communities, and further out as our community expands through common goals and values, enabled by the support of partnerships in our area.

SEEDS is excited to announce that we have been awarded two grants at the end of 2021 which will allow us to forward our sustainability work in 2022, read about them both below. In our #SEEDSGoodNews section, we are thrilled to celebrate the growth of renewable energy sources in our local area. And our Newsletter goals for the new year

include regular updates on the progress of Community Solar, as we work towards realizing it in Pennsylvania and celebrating the progress of our neighbors in New York and beyond.

Our SEEDS mission is to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable living in our communities. We are looking forward to this new year and new opportunities to continue that mission. If you are not already a member of SEEDS, [consider joining](#). If you are looking for opportunities to get more involved [consider volunteering](#). Look out for our monthly Newsletter in your inbox, and contact us at [info@seedsgroup.net](mailto:info@seedsgroup.net) with ideas or for more information about volunteering.

Hope to hear from you in 2022!

### **Local News**

#### **SEEDS Awarded Grant from Scranton Area Foundation, Expands Energy Assessment Services into Lackawanna County**

SEEDS is thrilled to announce the receipt of a \$10,000 Robert H. Spitz Environmental Grant from the Scranton Area Community Foundation. The grant will be used to support the expansion of SEEDS's The Energy Awareness Action Movement (TEAAM) initiative into Lackawanna County. The program encourages local homeowners to save energy through energy assessments done by SEEDS volunteers, and students who will be trained by SEEDS and a certified instructor. This intergenerational program aims to assist especially low-income families to save money on their energy bills, and also provide students with interactive, hands-on experience that can be used in their future lives and careers.

SEEDS Executive Director Olga Trushina said, "The TEAAM initiative is one of the original SEEDS programs that defined our mission to the community. It's all about collaborating across-the-board on energy conservation projects. And we can't wait to begin our work in Lackawanna County, the home of the 'Electric City'!"

Funding is going toward assessment equipment, training, and program management. TEAAM will also be accompanied by public forums and local media support, laying the basis for a region-wide conservation effort, which SEEDS expects to result in thousands of kilowatt hours of documented electricity saved based on the previous years of this program's existence.

According to the Scranton Area Community Foundation, "the Robert H. Spitz Foundation

was established from the estate of Robert H. Spitz in 2015. Mr. Spitz was born in Scranton and was a 1955 graduate of Scranton Central High School and the University of Miami, Florida. Before retirement, Mr. Spitz had been employed by the U.S. Department of Labor and was also



SCRANTON AREA  
Community FOUNDATION  
SERVING THE PEOPLE OF LACKAWANNA COUNTY SINCE 1954

the owner of several local

————— The —————  
**Robert H. Spitz**  
————— Foundation —————

Arby's restaurants. To date, the Robert H. Spitz Foundation has provided over \$3.7 million in funding to the community. The Scranton Area Community Foundation has served as the administrator of the Robert H. Spitz Foundation since 2016."

## Local News

### SEEDS Awarded Overlook Estate Foundation Grant to Fund Sustainability Initiatives

SEEDS is honored to receive a \$4,750 grant from the Overlook Estate Foundation, "a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the natural world." The funding will be used to support SEEDS's educational programming and outreach efforts, including the *Today's Main Ingredient* podcast, farm tour videos, SEEDS Reads, and other digital content.



### Overlook Estate Foundation

According to the Foundation, "[t]he purpose of the foundation is to encourage, promote and support cultural activities and events in the community, especially those which introduce, educate and advocate for increased awareness and responsibility for the conservation and preservation of the beauty and integrity of our heritage."

SEEDS Executive Director Olga Trushina explains that "SEEDS and The Overlook Estate Foundation have a similar mission, which is why we continue to work together. Sharing the joy of a completed sustainability project has been so rewarding, and this initiative will be no different." She continues, "This grant will support useful and engaging content creation that will broaden sustainability applications and the love for our NEPA community."

*Today's Main Ingredient: Bringing Farm Food to Your Table* is a podcast produced by SEEDS

of Northeastern Pennsylvania and consists of 15-minute audio programs focusing on local farms and food businesses one ingredient-per-episode at a time. The first season consisted of 25 weekly episodes and featured foods from the summer's growing season and into fall harvest. [Find past episodes here.](#) SEEDS Reads can be found on the [SEEDS YouTube channel](#) and features a special guest reading a picture book connected to the SEEDS mission of sustainability and related themes. SEEDS is excited to apply the Overlook Estate Foundation grant funds to extend this existing programming and create more. Follow SEEDS on our social media platforms to see more digital content aimed at education and outreach, or check your inbox for future newsletters for more!

## **Local News**

### **Solar Charger Installed**

Check out the new solar-powered phone charger at The Stourbridge Project!

This solar-powered phone charging station was donated to SEEDS by its designer and builder, Tony Komar. SEEDS has installed the phone charging station at the Stourbridge Project in honor of Lisa Glover, a dedicated community improver, who designed the solar kiosk inside the Stourbridge Project.

SEEDS selected to install this innovative tool for the use of park attendees and river trail walkers. While families, teens, visitors and neighbors enjoy this scenic slice of nature, playing basketball or walking on a lunch break, they can plug in their cell phone's USB cord into the weather-protected, solar-powered charging house. Having a well charged phone is

not only convenient, it's also a lifeline in the modern world.



**Local News**

**Olga Trushina Guest on  
WVIA Keystone Edition**

Did you catch SEEDS Executive Director Olga Trushina on WVIA Keystone Edition on December 6? The episode focused on a discussion of the pros and cons of green energy options like solar panels and home windmills, moderated by host Larry Vojtko (pictured left). Olga (right) was joined by Dr. Marlene Troy (center) from Wilkes University and Rachel McDevitt, WITF State Impact PA reporter (not pictured).



Olga discussed all things clean energy, sustainability, and the state of Community Solar legislation in PA. Watch the [full episode here](#) for an informative and thorough discussion of where we are with clean energy, green energy and sustainability in Pennsylvania.

## Thoughts on #CommunitySolar

### SEEDS Member Explains the Status of Community Solar in PA

There is a shale pit in my community I thought might be a perfect location for a community solar project. After watching SEEDS Executive Director Olga Trushina on [WVIA Keystone Edition](#) talk about Community Solar I felt energized. During one of our walks around our side of our community, my wife and I brainstormed the steps to make Community Solar a reality for us, excited by the renewable energy access we could help bring to our neighbors.

Like over half of homes in Pennsylvania, our house is not suited for solar power—we are deep in a wooded area, and no matter how committed we are to renewable sources of energy, the kind of excavation required to remove trees to make it work just doesn't feel very environmentally aligned, let alone an affordable option. The shale pit across the street is open, with sunlight from all directions; it doesn't perk so there is no possibility of building on it; and it is centrally located in our portion of



*SEEDS member Chuck SanClementi is the Outreach Circle Representative*

the larger community. So how many neighbors would we need to get on board to proceed? Should we start knocking on doors? What are our first steps?

***Not so fast, it seems.*** Unfortunately, we were jumping the gun here because in Pennsylvania the logistical infrastructure for Community Solar doesn't yet exist. Even if we could get our neighbors together, there is nowhere to go with our request, no way to accrue and distribute the power, and no system to create it.

That's because of two bills sitting in committee right now without short-term prospect of a vote in the Pennsylvania State Assembly. Our state legislators need to hear from us, that if this is something a community wants to do we should not be stopped by our utilities laws not being updated to include Community Solar as an option.

As citizens impacted by the realities of climate change, we should have the power to come together with our neighbors and build this system if we want to. Our biggest challenge should not be the legality of what we want to do. Especially when [22 states, plus Washington DC, already have policies to support that option](#), and are moving forward with projects. Our neighbors in New York State have been working on Community Solar since 2017, and, according to the [National Community Solar Programs Tracker](#) from the [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#), as of the third quarter of 2021, they have 456 completed projects with 643 total megawatts of operational capacity.

[House Bill 1555](#), sponsored by Representative Kaufer, would amend Title 66 which governs public utilities and allow for Community Solar in Pennsylvania. [Senate Bill 472](#), sponsored by PA State Senator Scavello, would propose the same changes for Title 66 on the Pennsylvania Senate level. Read Senator Scavello's memo to Pennsylvania State Senators on this bill [here](#).

If you live in Pennsylvania you have two representative in the PA General Assembly, one in the State House, and one in the State Senate. [Find them both here](#) to contact them and tell them you support **HB 1555** and **SB 472**. Post about it on social media. Tell your friends and neighbors. Create a buzz and make a stir. If we as citizens are willing to do the work to organize it, our state representatives, who we elected, should be willing to vote Community Solar into existence in Pennsylvania.

**#SEEDSGoodNews**

**A 50-Acre Solar Farm in Hawley, PA**

According to the [Tri-County Independent](#) and [Wayne-Pike News](#), a 50 Acre, 3.7 milliwatt Solar Farm is steadily making its way to a reality in Hawley and could power the Wallenpaupack School District facilities, or alternatively about 600 homes in the Hawley area. It is scouted to be located in an area east of Hawley Borough, off of Route 6, behind the Lake Region location of the Dime Bank, near Harmony in the Woods amphitheater. Currently there is a third party consultant investigating its feasibility for the Wallenpaupack School District, and the Palmyra Township board of supervisors gave conditional approval for the project to move forward.

The project, proposed by ESA Solar, based in Florida, would include 412 racks to hold 9,878 solar panels, which would connect power to a PPL substation grid. No blasting is currently planned for the project, and PSA Solar plans on minimal disruption to the area, which includes clearing about 32 acres of wooded area but does not include paving or other impervious surfaces.

After the third party consultant gathers enough information to present to the Board of Education for Wallenpaupack School District they will be able to make a decision to move forward to receive the power generated by the solar farm. If Wallenpaupack does move forward, they have the potential to move towards 100% green energy, as they currently power their heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems using geothermal sources.

Public-private partnerships coming together to build huge solar farms that will bring solar energy to local citizens--this is the best news we've seen so far in 2022! What else will this year bring?

### **#SEEDSGoodNews**

Do you have any #SEEDSGoodNews stories to share with the SEEDS community? Send them to us at [info@seedsgroup.net](mailto:info@seedsgroup.net) or tag us on social media! They can be local stories from your community, or stories from around the world--anything to celebrate and spread the word about the progress of energy efficiency, renewable energy or sustainable living wherever you hear about it!

**If you are not a member of SEEDS, please consider [joining us](#) today!**

You can use this link to share our membership page with others:

<https://seedsgroup.net/become-a-member/>



**You will continue to receive our newsletters, invitations to our educational forums and other events. Members are eligible for free solar evaluations, have voting rights at our annual meeting, and help shape our programs and initiatives. For more information visit our website at [www.seedsgroup.net](http://www.seedsgroup.net).**