

Sun worshipper:

Lahser senior's interest in photovoltaic energy nets new energy source for LHS

Ryan Toussaint spent the summer thinking about the sun differently than many teenagers do.

Ryan, a Lahser senior, parlayed an interest in renewable energy into a design for solar energy panels to supply electricity to a portion of Lahser High School. His concept was realized in August, thanks to the support of generous donors of money, expertise and time.



The panels are installed on the north side of the main entrance plaza. They have a size of 1.6 Kilowatts and will receive sunlight for an average 4.3 hours a day. During the summer months the panels will produce the most power.

Over the course of a year, the system will harness 2,775 Kilowatt hours of raw energy. That's enough energy to power 20% of the lighting in Lahser's science wing.

An independent study class last semester provided the opportunity for Ryan to conduct research and develop a plan. After sketching ideas for a system at Lahser, a donor stepped forward to cover the \$12,500 cost of materials, and labor for installation.

"I saw how an idea can become a reality through hard work, dedication, and passion," Ryan explained. "I was able to plan and implement my project from start to finish, and learn valuable skills on how to organize and execute a work plan, contact individuals and communicate with them."

Ryan, who would like to study electrical or computer engineering at the University of Michigan, credits many individuals and companies with helping make his vision a reality. They include the anonymous donor from Michigan CAT, the Caterpillar dealer covering the lower peninsula of Michigan, who covered the project costs; and Mike Callahan, vice president of Strategic Energy Solutions who helped design the system and identify the suppliers/contractors.

Other support came from Enphase Energy, REC; as well as Lahser faculty, including principal Charlie Hollerith and teachers David Zulkiewski and Jessica Lupone, for strongly supporting his ideas and guiding his plan.

"I'm really proud of Ryan and all the work he put in," said Mr. Zulkiewski. "His interest in alternative energy along with his pride in the community is what fueled this project. He set some high goals for himself and diligently worked to accomplish them."

PROJECT FIND

If you have a child between the ages of birth and six years experiencing developmental delays, call Julie Magulak, Project Find coordinator, at 248-341-7962.

CHILD FIND

If you suspect your child has a disability affecting his/her school performance, please notify your child's teacher, counselor, principal, or Carolyn Packard, director for Special Education, at 248-341-5415.