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BUSINESS BEAT

Search for solar buyers

Roofing company branches out to green- and wallet-friendly options

Larry O'Donnell's grandfather started O'Donnell Roofing Co. in 1924, but after eight decades, the grandson wanted to branch out.

"This is the next piece of the industry," the Havertown resident says of solar power and installation of solar panels. "Back when [Bill] Clinton was president, he got me interested in the idea. Then everything came to life when in May of this year when the Pa. Sunshine grants materialized."

He trained in 2003 for installing the expensive solar PV panels — the average system of about 20 200-watt panels that provide 4,000 watts costs \$32,000

"This is the next piece of the industry." O'Donnell

before government rebates — and when the grant money started rolling in this year, he was ready.

His four-man team, including himself, have installed a couple systems already and have another three under construction. His foresight, however, has been hampered so far by the economy and consumer indecisiveness, he said.

"You'll get all the excuses in the world: 'I won't be living in my house that long' or 'I won't get the money back for nine



Larry O'Donnell's company installs solar panels across the region.

years',” O'Donnell said.

But he believes its only a matter of time before progressive thought prevails

and the market comes back on line. The savings are certainly there — for now. That 20-panel system, after

The details

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a \$9,600 federal income tax credit and \$9,000 Pa. Sunshine grant, will cost about \$18,000. According to recent commodity market prices, excess energy brought in by a private solar system have been sold to energy companies for \$200 to \$300 this summer.

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