

# Solar power helps deliver services to needy

By JAMES A. JONES JR.

jajones1@bradenton.com

**BRADENTON** — Eighteen months ago, the Bill Galvano One Stop Center opened to help the homeless, hungry and others in dire straits during a devastating economic recession.

Now, with the recent addition of 209 rooftop photovoltaic panels, 80 percent

of the power consumed by the Community Coalition on Homelessness and Our Daily Bread is coming from solar energy.

That allows more precious resources to go to clients, and less to the power company.

Lee Martin, building chairman of the Community Coalition on Homelessness, said the solar project was paid for

with a \$400,000 federal grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, often referred to as the federal stimulus.

The solar array at the One Stop Center, located just south of McKechnie Field, is believed to be the largest at a nonprofit in Florida, Martin said.

"It makes me feel wonderful knowing we will save on

our utilities and apply those dollars to help others," Martin said.

Prior to the installation of the solar panels, Martin estimated the combined power bill at the center at \$3,200 a month during the hottest months of summer.

Rex James, executive vice president of sales for Solar Direct, the Bradenton-based company that installed the

panels, said the materials were all American-made, and that about six local companies took part in the project, helping pump money into the local economy.

The direct current produced by the solar panels feeds into inverters on the back side of the building that change the power into the alternating current. A generator was also installed in the

event a storm knocks out local power and prevents the solar panels from functioning. The panels are designed

SOLAR TO 9A



Online extra

Hear audio of Rex James talking about the solar energy project with this story at [Bradenton.com](http://Bradenton.com).

THE HERALD [bradenton.com/news](http://bradenton.com/news)

FROM PAGE ONE

## SOLAR FROM 1A

to withstand 130 mph hurricane winds.

Bill O'Shea, community development project manager for Manatee County, which worked with the One-Stop Center on the grant application, said the project helps make the center more green than it was,

and also provides the center an opportunity to sell back excess power to Florida Power & Light.

Martin said the One-Stop Center is doing everything it can to minimize its overhead, and a smaller power bill is a step in the right direction.

"Our service has quadrupled in less than two years. The demand is incredible:

20,000 to 30,000 services a month," Martin said.

A celebrate-and-learn event is set for 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 9 at the center. A ribbon cutting ceremony, a 32-foot high power lift ride to the solar roof, facility tours and energy mini-seminars are planned. Nonprofits, businesses and residents are invited.

In addition, Martin said

residents are welcome to stop by for a tour during regular business hours.

"We are servicing not just the homeless, but others who are in dire need. We appreciate the donations of clothing and other items," Martin said.

James A. Jones Jr., *East Manatee Editor*, can be contacted at 745-7021.