

## Caroline celebrates fifth anniversary of local green movement

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The home of Steve and Cindy Nicholson, tucked away on Yaple Road in Caroline, has a wind tower, solar panels and generates 100 percent of its own electricity.

So when Energy Independent Caroline threw its five-year anniversary party Sunday, the Nicholson residence was an ideal location. Steve is a board member of EIC -- a collaborative effort between residents and the Town Board to use natural resources to achieve energy independence -- and retired "stay at home environmentalist," he said.

"Everyone is excited about the progress," Nicholson said. "It shows it is possible and it does not take a lot of effort, just steady effort."

The effort started in 2005 when the Town of Caroline became the second New York municipality to purchase 100 percent of its power from wind energy, said Dominic Frongillo, a councilmember and deputy town supervisor.

In April 2008 EIC coordinated Lighten Up Caroline. About 100 volunteers distributed one compact fluorescent light bulb and energy conservation pamphlets to every household in the town.

These light bulbs, said Frongillo, resulted in a decrease of carbon emissions and reduced energy costs by more than \$70,000 over the course of the life of the bulbs.

"I guess we are a leader now," Frongillo said. "To have a small, rural town be the state model is pretty awesome. Towns can take action and do not have to wait for the federal government."

Caroline also opened a new near-carbon-neutral town office in 2010 powered by the sun, daylight and heated and cooled with a geothermal system.

But for Nicholson, who moved to Caroline in 1981, the movement still has more to accomplish.

"It is a struggle to get others to make changes," he said. "You must be patient. But there is progress and it is good to see, for example, 30 houses on this year's green house tour. Fifteen years ago there was only one or two."

The lightbulb mission inspired Lighten Up Tompkins, said Frongillo, which will take place Saturday. A compact fluorescent light bulb, along with information packets, will be distributed to 5,000 homes across Dryden, Lansing, Ulysses, Enfield, Newfield and Danby.

EIC also hopes to play a part in the Enfield Energy turbine wind farm. Their main goal is to make sure the project happens, said Nicholson, but also work toward making it a community-owned wind farm.

"Tompkins County is the solar capital of New York State, if not the country," Nicholson said. "We are making a lot of progress and inspiring a lot of people."