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CONGRESSMAN OLVER AND USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT TOUR RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEM AT 100 UNIVERSITY DRIVE IN AMHERST

Amherst, MA – Congressman John Olver joined USDA Rural Development State Director, Jay Healy today on a tour of a commercial office building. The two were visiting David Marley, owner of 100 University Drive who has made upgrades to his buildings' renewable energy system which includes nine large solar panels that heat water and 420 photovoltaic panels that produce electricity.

Funds for Mr. Marley's system came from USDA Rural Development's Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP) and the Commonwealth's Solar Rebate Program.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced last week that Mr. Marley and 365 other recipients across the country had been selected to receive more than \$15 million in loans and grants to install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.

"It is imperative that we secure more self-sufficient energy resources for our country, and these grants will help enable the long-term sustainability that the Obama Administration is committed to," Vilsack said. "This funding will also help farmers and rural businesses become more efficient and competitive."

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) is a loan and grant program which encourages the development of renewable energy (bioenergy, geothermal, hydrogen, solar, wind and hydro power) and energy efficiency projects. The REAP is administered by USDA Rural Development who works with local farmers and businesses to provide funding to conduct energy audits, feasibility studies, and develop renewable energy systems. Grants are available directly from Rural Development while guaranteed loans encourage local lenders to participate in funding opportunities.

"This financial assistance from USDA Rural Development will allow local farms and rural businesses to install renewable energy technology that enables them to increase their energy efficiency while decreasing their operating costs," said Congressman John Olver (MA-1). "Support such as this is particularly important during difficult economic times and I am pleased that we have been able to secure this level of USDA funding for Western Massachusetts."

Recently appointed USDA Rural Development State Director Jay Healy said "Global warming is the pre-eminent issue facing us today. These grants and loans not only assist our local farmers and businesses, but help our country as a whole."

The three Massachusetts REAP recipients are all located in the western portion of the state and include:

- Elysium, LLC is a Massachusetts Limited Liability Company owned by James Marley, located on University Drive in Amherst. An excellent location for photovoltaic generation, he has undertaken a project to install a photovoltaic electric system. This is part of a \$2 million “green” renovation of the building. The energy savings will make it easier to offer competitive commercial leases, and provide “green” work environments for their employees. The photovoltaic portion of the project is \$811,178. Rural Development has announced award of a guarantee loan of \$405,000 and grant of \$202,790. The balance is being supplied by applicant contribution. The guarantee loan will be made available to underwrite a loan to be advanced by Greenfield Savings Bank.
- Louis Aragi Sr. and his son, Louis Jr., of Sheffield, MA (Berkshire County), d/b/a Pine Island Farm, have been awarded \$500,000 guarantee loan and \$321,493 grant. The total project costs are \$1,302,743, which will be used to construct an anaerobic digester at their dairy farm. The guarantee loan will be advanced from First Pioneer Farm Credit (Claverack office). Pine Island Farm is located in the Housatonic River Valley at Sheffield. Louis Sr, has operated the farm for 40 years, and went into partnership with his son in 1995. The farm unit is 569 acres and rents approx. 1000 acres for feed production. This is a modern free-stall, parlor milking facility with a capacity of 700 cows. Manure management is a lagoon, which is pumped and spread. The digester will allow the operation to better manage its manure disposal; generate energy from the byproducts; and utilize excess solids. In addition to enhancing the long term environmental impacts of the livestock wastes, it will enable the farm to offset energy costs and hopefully remain profitable.
- Daniel Rosenberg, doing business as Real Pickles, is a small business located in Greenfield, specializing in organic pickles, sauerkraut and other pickled vegetables using natural fermentation pickling processes. The business got started in 2001 at the Franklin County Community Development Corporation commercial kitchen, and has now moved to its own facility on Wells Street. Renovations to the facility will include energy efficiency lighting and heating/cooling improvements costing \$58,238. The Rural Development grant will supply \$14,559 towards this work, the local power company \$4,533, and the balance from Mr. Rosenberg’s resources. General renovations are also taking place at the same time, financed by Greenfield Savings Bank.

USDA energy efficiency programs often yield double-digit energy savings. Additional information on the Rural Energy for America Program may be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/bprogs.htm.