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Media contact:  
Pam McConathy Schied  
Foresight Communications Group  
713-416-4410  
pam@thinkforesight.com

## **9<sup>th</sup> Annual ASES Houston Solar Tour Sat. Oct. 20** *Free self-guided open-house tour features 10 unique sites*

HOUSTON October 2012 – The American Solar Energy Society (ASES) Houston Solar Tour, presented by the Houston Renewable Energy Group, will showcase 10 Houston area homes, businesses and projects currently powered by solar energy on Sat., October 20 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m..

“The Tour this year includes a diverse and exciting mix of homes, businesses and innovative solar energy projects,” explains Kathleen Reardon, director of the 2012 tour and principal with RD Architecture. “It will feature working solar power systems ranging from large commercial installations to small residential projects. It is a unique opportunity for those interested in solar energy to get answers to their questions directly from industry experts and users.”

During the free self-guided, open-house tour, Houstonians will be able to get a first-hand look at active solar energy systems. Building owners, designers and solar system installers will be on hand at each site to answer questions and provide information to tour participants.

“Houstonians may be surprised to learn that hundreds of solar systems are currently generating power to many of our city’s skyscrapers, government buildings, hospitals, schools, businesses and homes,” says Ralph Parrott, president of HREG, and Manager of Marketing and Business Development at Solarcraft, Inc. “In fact, our city ranks very high nationally in the number of installed solar systems. Because these systems are typically installed on roof tops, they go largely unnoticed.”

Following the Solar Tour, participants are encouraged to visit Houston’s second annual Energy Day Festival that takes place at Hermann Square, City Hall and Tranquility Park from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

“Since our future will require a wide variety of energy sources, we plan to feature a number of energy technologies in addition to solar such as fuel cells, bio-diesel, cellulose algae fuels, large wind, plug-in vehicles and more at the fair,” says Parrott.

Here is a sample of the sites included on the 2012 ASES Houston Solar Tour:

- **IKEA's** 116,400 square-foot solar PV installation will generate enough energy annually to power 113 homes;
- A **Heights home** that sports a dramatic awning mount of solar panels complimenting its design, offering shade and annually generating close to 5,000 KWh, reducing electricity costs \$600 annually.
- The **City of Houston's Permitting Center**, a recently restored, four-story, 85-year-old former rice warehouse boasting not only a roof-top solar system, but raised floors to improve air flow and a demonstration vegetated roof watered with harvested rainwater and condensate from the building's HVAC system. The building also features two energy recovery ventilators, which contribute to its energy efficient HVAC system. The Green Building Resource Center is located on the first floor of the Permitting Center and offers an educational and interactive exhibit area featuring information on sustainable building renovation materials, practices and technologies.
- A **LEED\* registered home** built on a modest construction budget that combines solar power with a number of other sustainable building technologies and materials.
- A **Solar Shade Tree** at McReynold's Middle School designed and built by the University of Houston's Design Build Studio which provides shade and solar powered lighting and ceiling fans for students.
- A multi-purpose **SPACE (Solar Powered Adaptive Container for Everyone) pod** or portable mini-building capable of generating its own power, designed and fashioned by Metalab to operate off-grid.

Tour participants will be able to hitch rides to some of the solar tour sites via buses that will depart from City Hall early on tour day, or can drive to selected sites individually. Check the Solar Tour website [www.houstonsolartour.com](http://www.houstonsolartour.com) for maps, project details, photos of each tour site and solar system installation specifics.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual 2012 Houston Solar Tour is affiliated with a national initiative of the American Solar Energy Society (ASES). Houston is among 3,200 communities across the U.S. hosting similar open-house tours throughout the year of more than 5,500 solar-powered buildings.

Tour organizers hope to inspire individuals to make sustainable energy choices that help lower costs, support energy independence, protect against power outages and reduce carbon emissions.

\*LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a national green rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council to signify that homes and businesses have been designed and built to high standards of sustainability. Visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) for details.

#### ***ABOUT HREG***

*Established in 1999, the [Houston Renewable Energy Group \(HREG\)](http://www.hreg.org) strives to educate the residents of the greater Houston area on renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency, conservation and green building techniques and innovations. The group also serves as the local chapter of the Texas Solar Energy Society. HREG's members, who are primarily renewable energy enthusiasts, engineers,*

architects, specialists, system designers and users, work diligently to demonstrate a viable approach to sensible energy conservation and generation, and cleaner air. For more details, visit <http://www.txses.org/hreg/index.php>.

**ABOUT THE AMERICAN SOLAR ENERGY SOCIETY**

Established in 1954, the nonprofit [American Solar Energy Society \(ASES\)](http://www.ases.org) is the nation's leading association of solar professionals and grassroots advocates. Supported by more than 12,000 members, ASES' mission is to speed the transition to a sustainable energy economy. ASES advances education, research and policy, inspiring the nation to go solar. ASES publishes the award-winning SOLAR TODAY magazine, presents the National Solar Conference, rallies citizens to build a Solar Nation, and leads the National Solar Tour – the world's largest grassroots solar event. For more information, visit [www.ases.org](http://www.ases.org).

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