

# Awards given for “Going Green” in MoCo

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Members of the environmentally conscious community living in Maryland don't want to be overshadowed by their solar-powered Californian counterparts, if the Maryland Clean Energy Center can help it. The center announced Tuesday the 11 recipients of the first annual Clean Energy Awards in Rockville in an effort to educate the public about local projects that are advancing the state in the clean-energy field. The award winners include County Executive Isiah “Ike” Leggett (D), Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D) and Sen. Thomas “Mac” Middleton (D).

“We decided this was the year to recognize these projects in the field because so many advancements have been made and we feel that Maryland is on the cusp of a breakthrough,” said Kathy Magruder, executive director of the clean energy center. “We created categories for the awards we felt would be relevant year after year to make our stake in the sand, so to speak.”

Two lesser-known winners, Andrew Truitt of Standard Solar in Gaithersburg and Mahy Reddy of SemaConnect in Annapolis were awarded the “Bright Light Award” and “Start-up Entrepreneur of the Year” award, respectively.

“This is like money to us to receive such recognition and make people more aware about what we are trying to do,” said Reddy, who is the founder and president of SemaConnect which develops electric charging stations for electric vehicles. Reddy calls himself a “life-long entrepreneur” said he was looking for the next big thing in the industry in 2008 when he became fascinated by electric cars and trucks.

“Many still think that electric cars are just some sort of fad or experiment, but GM, Ford, Mitsubishi and Chrysler are developing and producing them,” Reddy said. “So, I'm working on the other end of making sure that the charging stations are available to electric-car drivers.”

Reddy predicts that by 2015, one out of 10 cars produced will be electric.

“The United States is definitely still in the race to see who will lead in the electric-car movement, and there is no reason why this area shouldn't be prepared,” Reddy said.

Truitt, a native Californian who serves as the director of service and residential engineering for solar-energy company Standard Solar, said that although his home state is leading in numbers of solar-energy generators, Maryland offers greater incentives to install solar panels on the roof of one's home or business.

“We are in the sweet spot in terms of grants and incentives for installing solar panels, but as it gets more mainstream, those incentives will be less and less,” Truitt said. “People often say to me, ‘Well, one day this might be feasible,’ but that day is today.”

“My work is educating those people in the permit and inspection industries that getting involved is not as complicated as it seems and that we need to be working together to make this happen,” Truitt said. Solar Standard has installed solar-energy services in 650 locations and was rated 73rd of the top 100 fastest-growing businesses of 2010 by Inc. Magazine.

According to the clean energy center's mission statement, the group's goal is to "encourage transforming the state's energy economy by catalyzing business growth, increasing 'green collar' jobs, and making clean-energy technologies, products and services affordable, accessible and easy to implement for all Maryland [residents]."

"We are hoping that this will help Maryland see the many ways we can reach our goals," Magruder said. "We want to help demonstrate that being environmentally conscious and economically aware are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they go hand-in-hand in many of these projects."

"This has been largely an awareness-building event and a way to bring together different voices from within the industry," Magruder said. "Years down the road, when it is all said and done, hopefully Maryland will be the one teaching other areas of the country about this industry."

The announcement precedes a Clean Energy Summit to be held at the Hilton-Inner Harbor in Baltimore on Oct. 4, where the awards will be formally presented. The summit will include a trade show of green products, a dinner, an awards program, workshops and panel discussions.