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BUSINESS

State invests in solar panel program

By Richard Lee
Assistant Business Editor

The Connecticut Clean Energy Fund has approved \$2 million to encourage residents to put solar panels on their homes, and a Westport architect expects to be busy as a result.

Westport architect and resident John Rountree, with Mark Pizzi, another Westport resident, recently received a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to promote the installation of solar energy panels in Fairfield County.

The only other state recipient of a \$10,000 grant was Thomas Filburn, a mechanical engineering professor at the

Westport architect to help with installations

University of Hartford, who will educate installers, businesses and property owners in the rest of Connecticut.

The three were among an audience of about 60 people who attended the initial statewide meeting of Solar Connecticut yesterday at the Westport Library. The session included solar panel installation businesses, educators, architects and home and businesses owners interested in learning more about the benefits of solar technology.

Rountree and Pizzi, a business consul-

tant and marketing specialist, will use the grant to make presentations to the public, engineers, architects and solar system installers.

The state's assistance program should provide an incentive to property owners to consider installation of photovoltaic or electricity-producing panels, or passive water heating panels, Rountree said, adding that several other states offer similar programs.

The three-year residential program provides installers with incentives that

will be passed on to their customers in the form of rebates. Participation by installers is limited to those selected through a request-for-proposal process. A list of approved installers will be released by next month.

"With the state incentives, it becomes affordable," said Rountree, who has had solar panels on his roof for three years.

The federal grant program is part of the Department of Energy's Million Solar Roofs Partnership, which has a goal of having solar panels on 1 million roofs in the United States by 2010.

"They're about one-quarter of the way

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