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Ronald McDonald House Installs Solar

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A Ronald McDonald House in San Diego, which supports families with seriously ill children at local hospitals, has plugged into the sun with a new solar photovoltaic array.

The 47-bedroom Ronald McDonald House, built to be energy efficient, is celebrating its first anniversary this month. It is expected to serve more than 20,000 families in 2010, according to a news release from the group.

"Ronald McDonald House decided to pursue solar energy to create a healthy and sustainable environment for the children and families we serve, and to help greatly offset power costs," said Bill Lennartz, president and chief executive of Ronald McDonald House of San Diego. "Our partners have been vital to our success as a resource to families in some of the most challenging times of their lives, and we are excited to now be producing clean solar energy to help us provide care to even more families."

A 116-kilowatt roof-mounted solar PV array is expected to generate an average of almost 148,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year. The 518 modules were supplied by Canadian Solar and the system was designed and installed by HelioPower. PV Powered supplied the inverter, which converts the array's DC electricity to AC. All of the companies provided donations in the form of price reductions to benefit the charity.

The San Diego facility is the first Ronald McDonald Charities House in California to install a solar-electric system. In addition to providing lodging and assistance for families who have seriously ill children at local hospitals, the house also has a Family Care Center that provides a daytime refuge for anyone with a child in a San Diego hospital.

"The Ronald McDonald House ensures families in San Diego receive the necessities they need as they care for their sick child, and we are so pleased to be able to provide our high-quality modules to this pivotal community facility," said Mike Miskovsky, U.S. general manager of Canadian Solar Inc.

Steve LoRusso, vice president of commercial sales at HelioPower, said, "Working with our affiliate company, Helio Micro Utility, we developed the critical solar financing structure that worked for them as a nonprofit entity and supported their green-building goals."

The building was constructed to high-efficiency standards and uses 17.5 percent less energy than a typical similar building in California. Building materials contain significant amounts of recycled content, and the house provides recycling stations for all guests and employees.

"Ronald McDonald House of San Diego makes life easier and more comfortable for many families in need," said Erick Petersen, vice president of sales and marketing at PV Powered. "We are honored to be a part of helping so many people by providing our inverter, with its field-proven reliability and uptime, to this important solar installation."

The San Diego Ronald McDonald House opened a year ago atop a six-story parking garage across from Rady Children's Hospital. It quadrupled the size of the previous Ronald McDonald House, which operated for nearly 30 years and had 12 bedrooms.

The building's new Family Care Center offers dining services, a computer lab, arts and crafts rooms, a children's play room, a teen center, a play yard, a faith room, outdoor play areas, a laundry, resting rooms and showers.

The **Ronald McDonald House Charities** receives 10 percent of its funding from local McDonald's Restaurant owners and operators. The remaining amount is raised from individual donations and from fund-raisers.

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