



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EMPOWER SOLAR TO SEND STUDENT COMPETITION WINNERS TO U.S. SOLAR DECATHLON**

*Long Island teens place first in solar competition, winning scholarships, trip to California*

**POINT LOOKOUT, NY (August 8, 2013)** — Three students from Suffolk County will travel to Irvine, California with EmPower Solar this October to view the many solar-powered homes designed by college students at the 2013 U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon.

EmPower Solar, an award-winning Long Island-based solar energy company, challenged New York high school students to create original essay and video submissions answering questions related to solar power and how it fits into today's energy paradigm.

The winning teams were announced at Family Solar Night held at the Town of Hempstead Energy Park in Point Lookout last Thursday. More than 100 students, family, and friends attended the event where they toured the energy park and viewed a large fleet of hybrid and all-electric vehicles that included Chevy Volts, BMWs, and Teslas.

While three teams stood out among the many submissions, team STATE walked away with the grand prize. Team members Jake Welde of Stony Brook, Elaina Zodiatis of St. James, and Sara Kaufman of Mount Sinai won an all-expense-paid trip to California and a \$1,000 scholarship each.

"Participating in the EmPower Solar Competition was a wonderful experience," said Zodiatis.

"Researching the information for the essay portion taught me a lot about solar energy and gave me the opportunity to collaborate with people I had never met before."

"We learned a lot and we had a lot of fun," added Welde, who is looking forward to the trip.

The winning team met through Avalon Park's STATE Program, a youth volunteer corps in Stony Brook lead by Coordinator Rebecca Kassay.

Second place team, Solar Generation, each received \$400 scholarships and included Jane Jang and Juno Lee, Bronx High School of Science; Jonathan Kim, Northport High School; and Jeff Kim, Stuyvesant High School.

Third place went to students from Farmingdale High School; Ann Lin, Anne Chen, and Amelia Makhanlall.

Both second and third place teams will join Schieren and Sachs for a business lunch later this month.

In 2005, David Schieren, CEO of EmPower Solar, and COO Greg Sachs participated as a graduate student and faculty advisor, respectively, in the Solar Decathlon, an event that shaped their future.

Describing the event as life-changing, the business partners said they wanted to share their passion for renewable energy with local students.

“We launched this competition to challenge our region’s rising stars to think critically and creatively about our energy infrastructure, and to promote teamwork and entrepreneurship. The high caliber student entries and thoughtful guest judge participation exceeded our expectations for the event, and we are very grateful. It was incredibly fun and inspiring to celebrate with everyone at the Town of Hempstead Energy Park, and we can’t wait to take Team STATE to California,” said Schieren and Sachs in a joint statement.

To choose the winning team, eight solar advocates assisted as guest judges, including Ellen Honigstock, Director of Construction Education at Urban Green Council, and Town of Hempstead Supervisor Kate Murray.

“As we work hard to progress our own environmental and green initiatives it’s inspiring to see our next generation build their own clean energy legacies,” added Murray. “The future of solar power shines brightly, reflected by the dedication of the talented young men and women in this competition. I thank EmPower Solar for their partnership in cultivating our future leaders in the important field of renewable energy.”

"It was such a pleasure to act as a judge in this competition," Honigstock said. "It's gratifying to see the next generation have such a good understanding of the need for renewable energy in transitioning to a more sustainable economy."

#### **ABOUT EMPOWER SOLAR**

EmPower Solar is a leading solar engineering and installation company serving residential and commercial markets in New York. Since 2003, EmPower has installed over 600 residential, commercial and non-profit solar power systems in the Tri-State Area. Additionally, EmPower has consulted on many solar and alternative fuel infrastructure projects throughout the country, including solar powered hydrogen fueling systems and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. EmPower is committed to the EmPowering Way operating philosophy, defined by the highest quality work and professionalism. David G. Schieren, CEO, is a founding Board Member of the International Solar Decathlon Alumni Association. More information about EmPower can be found online at <http://www.empower-solar.com>.

#### **ABOUT THE SOLAR DECATHLON**

The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon is a program that aims to help the visiting public learn about the benefits of applying sustainable, energy efficient, and cost-saving features to their own homes. Collegiate teams of university students compete in various contests, including architecture, engineering, energy balance, and market appeal. The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon will take place Oct. 3–13, 2013, at the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, California. This event will showcase 20 highly efficient, solar-powered houses in a specially constructed solar village at the Orange County Great Park. Winners of the 2013 EmPower Solar Student Competition and their chaperone will attend the DOE decathlon from Thursday, Oct. 10 to Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013.

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