

## Panelist Profile: Sara and Jeff Hager

Hi neighbors! As Sustainable Grandview prepares for our Solar Info Session on **Friday February 26th, at 3:30pm** (see event details here: <https://sg-solarinfo.eventbrite.com>), we are going to run a series of profiles here to introduce you to our panel members.

Today, let's say hello to Sara and Jeff Hager! Sara and Jeff have lived in the 5th by Northwest area since 2009 and moved into their current home in 2012. Sara says, "we have always loved living in this area and the convenience of walking to all of our favorite places." Many of you will recognize Sara through her job as an Intervention Specialist in the Grandview Heights School District for the past 11 years. Jeff has taught 7-12th grade Life Science at The Buckeye Ranch for 10 years.

Things they like about the Grandview area: "We most enjoy going for walks around the neighborhood and keeping an eye out for the local Cooper's hawks and occasional bald eagles." With easy access to the bike trails and Scioto/Olentangy Rivers, Jeff puts his bikes to use quite often and their kayaks get a lot of action in the summer months. Sara also loves being able to walk or bike to work on nice days. Their favorite spots include Grandview Grind and Jeni's. "We can't envision living anywhere else as wonderful as the 43212 area."

When did you go solar? January 2016. Installation performed by Ecohouse Solar.

Why did you go solar? "We have always done our best to be environmentally conscious and continued to find ways to be more eco-friendly. As a science teacher, Jeff conducted a unit on sustainable energy and it inspired him to look more seriously into going solar. We knew the obvious environmental benefits, while also anticipating a much lower monthly electric bill."

Benefits you've experienced since going solar: Sara admits she was hesitant to take the leap. "I knew nobody else who had ever done it!" She adds, "I was worried that we would not be able to afford the cost up front, but the entire process has been extremely manageable financially and is truly paying off in the long-term. Our monthly electric bill has been reduced significantly, and there are many months where we have produced enough energy that we have a \$0 electric bill." One additional benefit Sara and Jeff report is that the process of going solar has made them much more conscientious of how they are using energy in their home, and they have sought ways to reduce their usage as much as possible. As for the most unexpected benefit? Sara says, "We did not anticipate the interest and curiosity that so many people have taken in our panels over the years – so much so that even in my small coal-mining town in eastern Ohio, both my brother and uncle decided to go solar and have also loved it."

### Additional notes about the Hagers' installation:

1. You might wonder, how are there some months when Sara and Jeff have a \$0 electric bill? Where are they getting electricity at night when the panels aren't producing energy? The answer lies in something called net energy metering, which we'll discuss at the open house. In short, virtually all solar arrays are connected to the utility grid, so the customer effectively buys energy when the panels aren't producing enough to fully supply the house, and they sell any surplus back to the utility when the panels produce more than is needed. Rooftop solar owners most often break even or get a credit on their bill during the Spring when sunshine is plentiful but not hot enough to drive up A/C demand.
2. Did you know solar can be a great option even if you don't have a south-facing roof? The front roof of Sara and Jeff's house (on which the panels are mounted) faces west. It's a very common misconception that solar is only financially viable when the array faces south. It is true that east and west-facing roofs produce around 15% less energy than a perfect south-facing roof. However, since the cost of solar has fallen so dramatically, both east and west facing arrays can still save you thousands of dollars on your utility bill over the lifetime of the system. Also, as we decarbonize our energy grid using solar, it will be important to position solar panels in a range of directions to maximize the hours of the day in which we draw energy from the sun. Peak electrical usage tends to be during the afternoon hours, when west-facing arrays are producing more than south facing arrays. Of course, not every roof situation is advised for solar. In particular, north-facing arrays are not recommended (unless you live in the southern hemisphere!).

