



The **Blittersdorf RenewableEnergy/Conservation-Stewardship Project** takes a long view of renewable energy in the US by exploring its origins in the ferment of the 1960s and 70s, and charting its trajectory across the following decades, as seen through the eyes of those of those who have made a life-long commitment to this work. Interestingly, many pioneers in the field of wind energy were Vermonters, including Don Mayer, David Sellers, Jito Coleman, Bob Sherwin, among others, all of whom are being interviewed. But we are also talking to the next generation of renewable energy leaders like Jeff & Dori Wolfe who founded groSolar.

I spend a lot of time thinking: what is the ad phrase? What is the picture? What is the conversation that gets somebody to flip their mental switch on and say, "Oh, yea! I get it!" We need to do this and I can afford it, therefore, I should because I can and it's great. It's good. If it's good for me, it's good for the planet." And just like that. You know, "instead of buying a new boat, I'll buy a solar panel system. I'll buy the boat next year."

How do you do that? I don't need a technology answer. I don't need more incentives. I need Americans to want it—the power of cultural want. Look at what it did for SUVs. Look what it did for iPhones. It's all we need. All we need because it's cultural change, cultural understanding, and the solution's easy. It's easy.

—Jeff Wolfe, groSolar



Dori and Jeff Wolfe of groSolar

Narrative Stage

In February the VFC staff presented Sugaring Stories—an intimate afternoon exploring the time-honored Vermont tradition of maple sugaring. At this event Executive Director, Brent Björkman, led a narrative stage where local sugarmakers had a chance to share stories about their lives in the sugar bush. Guests this day included Kenn Hastings from Breadloaf View Farm in Cornwall, Bob Baird of Baird Farm in North Chittenden, and Moe Rheume of Middlebury.



Palmer's sugar house

Intern Projects

In 2011 these included a project conducted by Francis Riley, anthropology major from Green Mountain College, interviewing Vermont potters who use wood-fired kilns; Katie McAuley, also an anthropology major from Green Mountain College, interviewing Vermont vintners; and Mary Wesley conducting research with Grangers and contra dancers in Montpelier.

Featured Intern Project



Mary Wesley calling a contra dance at Capital City Grange

The National Grange was formed after the Civil War to protect the economic and political interests of farmers and provide a forum for rural communities. Today, Grange communities endure throughout the country, although they are undergoing a process of redefining their place in the 21st century as they confront an aging and dwindling membership. Montpelier's Capital City Grange was founded in 1880. For years they held meetings and potlucks in a hall perched atop a hill on Route 12. When it became obvious that Grangers could no longer afford or maintain the hall, they began looking for a buyer. What they did not anticipate was the reaction of their tenants—a group of contra dancers who had used the hall for dancing every month since the 1980s.

What followed was a surprising union as dancers rallied to save the best dance floor in town and the Grangers carefully considered accepting these tenants into their membership. This collaboration grew and one night in January 2005 some seventy contra dancers were led en masse to join Capital City Grange #469. Now dancing Grangers and elderly Grangers meet together the first Saturday of the month to conduct Grange business and learn things, eat potluck supper together, and dance. Mary Wesley, who is a "caller" herself, is interviewing members of this community to collect stories about this unusual transition, and learn how contra dancers and Grangers are working together to maintain what is dear to them.

Your generous support makes it possible for our folklorists to collect the diverse voices of Vermont. If you would like to learn more about these projects, please contact Brent Björkman, Executive Director, 802-388-4964, or bbjorkman@vermontfolklifecenter.org.