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Allsteel's "Solar Sunflowers"

***Iowa Furniture Manufacturer is First in State to Utilize Outdoor Solar Panels
To Energize Corporate Headquarters***

***Energy-Saving "Sunflowers" Provide 300 kWh of Energy per Month –
Enough to Power 40 Laptop Computers, Eight Hours a Day***

Muscatine, Iowa -- September 19, 2005 -- From Van Gogh to your neighbor next door, everyone seems to have a special affinity toward sunflowers. The giant flowers, which resemble the sun itself, adorn public and private gardens across the U.S.

But in Muscatine, Iowa, the members of Allsteel Incorporated, a leading designer and manufacturer of office furniture, have become accustomed to a sunflower all their own. While not yellow in color, Allsteel's sunflowers are something to be seen. Measuring more than 20 feet high and encompassing 150 square feet of Allsteel's garden, these solar sunflowers generate one percent of the energy required to power the needs of Allsteel's 200 members in the company's headquarters building. This equates to enough energy to power 40 laptop computers, eight hours a day; or the amount of energy needed to run half of the electricity needed for the average home for a month.

Planting the Seed

The idea for the Solar Sunflowers germinated from a meeting held with Allsteel's Environmental Manager, Scott Lesnet; and John Root, Energy Services Advisor for Muscatine Power and Water.

According to Lesnet, “At Allsteel, sustainability is not just about Allsteel products. It’s the result of good people making responsible choices for the right reasons. For the last 20 years, we’ve been integrating environmental management into our manufacturing processes; and we wanted to extend that commitment to other areas of our business. It was only natural to look at the energy efficiency of our headquarters building.”

Lesnet met with Root to begin brainstorming energy-saving concepts. The two reviewed a number of ideas and confirmed the most efficient solution moving forward was with an array of solar panels.

“Reducing energy is one thing; but using alternative forms of renewable energy is a separate concept,” added Lesnet. “One of our environmental initiatives at Allsteel is promoting alternative forms of energy; and the solar panels affirm our commitment.”

The Solar Sunflowers were installed on Allsteel’s property in October, 2004 at a cost of \$27,000. The solar array will offer 18 years of energy production and provide an average of 300 kWh of energy when the company needs the energy most.

“One of the most unique aspects of the solar array is that, unlike wind generation or other alternative forms of energy, it provides energy at peak times and corresponds to utility needs,” said Root. “For example, the solar array generates the greatest amount of energy during the summer months – when air conditioners, fans and other power-guzzling mechanisms are used most often. This is ideal for a company like Allsteel, because it provides energy when traditional prices are at their highest.”

Green Power

So, how do these giant sunflowers produce *that much energy*? According to Lesnet, it’s really quite simple.

“The solar array receives the natural sunlight on 12 panels on each sunflower,” he explained. “The electricity generated by the array is sent underground directly into a

control panel in our building and is dispersed where it is needed most. If the array generates too much energy; it is fed back into the grid until the energy is needed.”

In addition to the energy savings provided by the solar array, there are a number of key benefits, including:

- Maintenance free – once installed, the Solar Sunflowers are self-sufficient and do not require any maintenance on behalf of Allsteel or Muscatine Power and Water.
- Tax Credit – the State of Iowa has a 1.5 cent production credit for solar energy, which went into effect in 2004.
- Quick Payback – in addition to the tax credit, the payback on the solar array is very short – just ten years.
- Additional Energy Conservation Tactics – according to Lesnet, the installation of the panels has sparked a number of complementary energy-saving activities at Allsteel:

- High efficiency lighting
- Large motor review – Allsteel is looking at ways to start large manufacturing machines with less energy
- Energy analysis – a team is currently reviewing overall how the company uses electricity and how it can conserve this valuable resource

The Next Crop

Allsteel’s Solar Sunflowers have been “growing” for almost a year now, and both the company and Muscatine Power & Water are extremely pleased with their results. In fact, the electric company has used Allsteel as an example when promoting the array to other area businesses. And Allsteel is considering supplementing the solar array by installing roof-top solar panels to its building.

“Beyond the energy-savings of the solar array, one of the most significant benefits we’ve seen is in the eyes of our Allsteel members and customers,” explained Lesnet. “Everyone here is extremely committed to the environment and our sustainability initiatives, yet

most of our energy-saving measures are ‘invisible’ to the average member and customer. The sunflowers provide a great visual statement to our commitment to the environment and demonstrate that we’re not just talking green – we’re really making a difference.”

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Editor’s Note: Allsteel’s commitment to the environment includes a number of product initiatives, including Reach™ integrated storage, a system with a material intensity rate that is 14 percent less than the typical workstation; fabrics made of Polylactide acid (PLA), a man-made fiber derived from 100 percent renewable resources; #19, a chair which is 88 percent recyclable and features a “take back” option, among others.

For high-resolution images of the “Solar Sunflowers”:

1. Type <ftp://ftp.robertfalls.com/web/Allsteel> into your Web browser
2. Type in username: media, password: media
3. Click on the file named Solar Sunflowers