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Green-energy legislation may be gold mine for New Rochelle solar company

By Jerry Gleeson

New Rochelle-based solar energy company expects to more than double its revenue and boost hiring this year, the result of growing demand being fed by federal stimulus spending and other government subsidies, the company's president said.

Jared Haines, the top manager at Mercury Solar Systems, also said that new energy legislation being considered in the U.S. Senate this week "is just going to drive additional growth to the industry."

Haines and Rep. John Hall, D-Dover Plains, were at Boys and Girls Clubs of Northern Westchester in Mount Kisco yesterday to promote the technology and the proposed American Clean Energy and Security Act, which passed the House of Representatives last month.

Mercury installed a 50-kilowatt solar system at the club this year. The system was sold to Robison Oil, which is selling the electricity from its 240 panels to the club. Robison's president and chief executive, David Singer, is on the club's board.

The club is saving about \$1,000 a month in electric costs, Haines said, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 99,000 pounds a year. Five acres of trees would have to be planted to reduce emissions by that amount, he said.

About 60 people work at Mercury Solar Systems, up from five when it started 2 1/2 years ago. Haines expects employment to reach 80 by year's end, and revenue to rise to nearly \$40 million, up from \$15 million last year.

Mercury announced last month it had acquired K-Star Solar, a residential solar installer on Long Island, but 90 percent of Mercury's job growth has been organic, Haines said. Commercial installations account for about 85 percent of its revenue.

Haines is seeing more competitors.

"There's more and more people getting into it every month," he said. "It's definitely become more competitive out there, which is OK."

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The American Clean Energy and Security Act is broad legislation that aims to promote renewable energy sources, energy efficiency in buildings and appliances, and cap-and-trade limits on pollution emissions. It would provide rebates to certain industries to compensate for costs associated with the program.

Hall said the energy legislation would create 100,000 new jobs in the state.