



## **4 Plymouth schools going solar**

*District installs 4,200 panels*

By Kurt Moffett

PLYMOUTH — Town and school officials on Tuesday celebrated the installation of some 4,200 solar panels at the town's four schools.

Mayor David V. Merchant said the solar installations are expected to collectively generate 1.6 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually, and will offset approximately 27,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over their lifetime. The school district will achieve significant financial benefits with no installation costs.

"To put this in perspective," Merchant said, "that amount of carbon reduction is roughly equivalent to eliminating the consumption of more than 3 million gallons of gasoline or planting more than 620,000 trees. It's amazing when you look at numbers like that."

The mayor said the local school system is part of a national movement toward renewable energy sources. He said the Solar Energy Industry Association claims there are more than 3,700 schools with solar panels across the county. Those school systems combined are projected to save \$78 million a year in energy costs.

Teachers also are incorporating the operation of the solar panels into their lesson plans for math and science.

"The Plymouth public schools are proud to join the ranks of school districts in Connecticut that have made a strong commitment to solar power," Superintendent Martin J. Semmel said in a statement. "The students of Plymouth will learn a wonderful life-long lesson of creating renewable energy in our communities."

The panels, which were activated on April 1, are owned and operated by New York-based ConEdison Solutions and maintained by New York-based Safari Energy, the company that designed and installed the panels.

Neither ConEdison nor Safari representatives could say how much money the panels are going to save the local school district in energy costs, but a few years ago, another solar company gave a projected savings estimate of \$5 million over 20 years.

The district's contract with ConEdison is for 20 years.