

Wind Power Comes to Henry County

One year ago, Tom Palmer turned in the paperwork necessary to become an energy partner with Tennessee Valley Authority. Now, Palmer said it's hard to believe he is in the process of generating his own electricity, especially since he can remember a time before his family even had electricity. "It's amazing how far technology has come," said Faye Cooper, Palmer's fiancée, as she looks up at a wind turbine 60 feet above the back yard of Palmer's Kentucky Lake Drive home in the Cypress Creek area.

Palmer started his electrical adventure when he saw an advertisement from the TVA seeking applicants for their Green Power Switch Generation Program. With the knowledge that he had a good steady breeze at his property near Kentucky Lake, he decided to invest in a wind turbine system to generate electricity.

It was not until after he learned he had been accepted for the energy partners program that he really started researching the energy options available to him. "Being a common homeowner, I've really learned a lot," Palmer said. "You want to get right on with it but have to take it one step at a time." After his research was complete, Palmer decided on a combination system of both solar panels and a wind turbine.

Although locations in West Tennessee are generally considered to be poor choices for wind power, Palmer said he had learned that he had an ideal set up with his land near Kentucky Lake. Hills on either side of his property form a natural channel for wind coming in off the lake. He is actually the only person in this five-county area, which includes Henry, Carroll, Gibson, Weakley and Benton counties, to have a wind turbine set up to generate electricity for the TVA.

The electricity generated by Palmer's equipment is fed directly into the TVA power grid. "I'm hooked up to help TVA provide power to this area," Palmer said. While some of the power he generates will go to power his own home, the excess will be sold to the TVA. Palmer will be paid for his electricity by receiving a credit on his electricity bill from the BPU for the excess electricity. Palmer can request check payments for these funds. Although Palmer has learned that he is eligible for both a federal tax credit for his system as well as some incentive money from TVA, Palmer has used his own money to fund his project. In the Generation Partners program, TVA will buy 100 percent of the energy produced by Palmer's solar and wind systems. According to information on TVA's website, he will receive the retail rate plus 12 cents a kilowatt hour that he generates with the solar system while he will earn 3 cents a kilowatt hour that he generates with the wind system. The program will last for ten years.