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**SOLARIZE BLAINE DRIVES NEARLY ONE MILLION DOLLARS OF INVESTMENT IN LOCAL ECONOMY**

*Celebration Event set for September 30*

**BLAINE COUNTY, IDAHO** – Blaine County is finding that solar energy is a major economic boon thanks to abundant sunshine and dramatic price declines of over 70% in the past 10 years. With the same solar potential as North Florida, Blaine County is capitalizing on this opportunity with 36 solar installations on homes and businesses through *Solarize Blaine*, the nonprofit program that closed out its 20-week campaign on August 19. These installations have generated almost one million dollars in new local investment and will add 247 kilowatts of clean energy capacity to the grid in Blaine County, a 500% increase over 2015 levels.

Launched by the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience in March 2016, Solarize Blaine was designed to encourage the growth of solar power by making it cheaper and easier for residents to make the switch to a clean, local source of energy. The program used a bulk-purchasing model to reduce the cost of a solar system by over \$3,000 for the average homeowner.

To celebrate the success of the program and unveil what's next, the Institute will host a happy-hour celebration event on September 30 from 5:30-7:00pm at the Sawtooth Brewery at 631 Warm Springs Road in Ketchum. This event is open to the public and all are encouraged to drop-in.

"Solarize Blaine has radically accelerated our community's transition to clean energy," said Katie Bray, the program's director, "In 20 weeks we brought online five times as much solar electricity as what was added in all of 2015, and we drove about \$900,000 of investment into our local economy."

Solarize is a national program supported by the U.S. Department of Energy. The program has been implemented in more than 250 communities around the nation, but Solarize Blaine was the first program in Idaho.

"In 2015 solar jobs in the United States grew at 12 times the rate of the rest of the U.S. economy and earlier this year the U.S. hit 1 million solar installations with projections of 2 million solar installations in just 2 more years," said Aimée Christensen, Executive Director of the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience. "With recent dramatic solar price drops, the Institute saw the chance to help bring quality, year-round jobs to our community, to save residents and businesses money on their power bills, to reduce pollution from our local energy consumption, and to begin to build toward a more reliable

local energy system. With Idaho's first Solarize program, Solarize Blaine has already created a handful of new jobs with local solar companies.”.

The Solarize Blaine program received 225 requests for solar evaluations from homeowners, businesses, and nonprofits throughout the Wood River Valley. New installations are expected to continue popping up through the spring of 2017. Solarize Blaine and the program's guaranteed reduced prices have ended, but those who are interested in solar may still sign up to get a free solar site assessment for their home, business, or nonprofit at [www.solarizeblaine.org](http://www.solarizeblaine.org)



Solarize Blaine is a limited-time program that helps the people of Blaine County install solar power at a discounted price and through a streamlined process. Based on the Solarize model used across the country and endorsed by the U.S. Department of Energy, Solarize Blaine leverages the power of group purchasing to reduce the cost of going solar and the tiered pricing structure increases savings as more people participate. Competitive financing is available through local banks. For more information, please visit: <http://www.solarizeblaine.org>



#### **About the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience**

The Sun Valley Institute for Resilience advances policy leadership, public engagement and targeted investments to ensure economic prosperity, environmental protection and human wellbeing in its home community of Idaho's Wood River Valley and beyond. Sun Valley leaders founded the Institute in the spring of 2015 to protect and enhance local quality of place for future generations of residents and visitors alike, and to serve as a resource for communities everywhere. From the original Native American inhabitants to the miners and ranchers of the valley's early days, from the Union Pacific engineers who built the world's first chairlift to those who challenge themselves in its mountains and rivers today, Sun Valley is about history and tradition, grit and perseverance, well-being and quality of life. The risks, assets and values of Sun Valley make it the perfect home for an institute dedicated to resilience. For more information, please visit: [www.sunvalleyinstitute.org](http://www.sunvalleyinstitute.org)