

## Eighth-grader helps Humane Society go solar

Platt Middle School student designed project for his bar mitzvah

By Peter Budoff Camera Staff Writer  
Posted: 10/03/2009 12:06:39 PM MDT

Dustin Michels knew he wanted to do something big for his bar mitzvah project. His idea came after solar panels were installed at his house.

"I thought they were really cool and I thought it would be cool to get them installed somewhere in the community," the Platt Middle School eighth-grader said. "I thought of the Humane Society because I love animals and I thought it would be a good way for them to save money and send a good message about what kind of business they are."

Michels approached Lisa Pedersen, the CEO of the Boulder Valley Humane Society, to see if they were interested in getting solar panels installed.

"I was so impressed with how passionate and articulate he was," said Pedersen. "He had a PowerPoint presentation outlining the benefits of solar energy, how much it would cost and how much it would save."

Michels had secured a grant from Namaste Solar of Boulder to cover half the cost of the project. The Humane Society was initially hesitant to take on the project and the remaining cost, which would have been about \$12,000, according to Pedersen.

Michels insisted he would take care of fundraising, and eventually got a call from the Center for Resource Conservation telling him he had received an anonymous grant covering the remaining cost.

"He single-handedly put this whole thing together," said Pedersen. "I told him afterward he's got a future career in fundraising."

Namaste Solar took care of installing the panels, a project that was completed in May. According to Pedersen, the panels should save the shelter between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per year on energy bills -- money it plans to put toward animal care.

"It's like making a big donation," she said. "Over time, it's going to be really great."

Pedersen said she is thrilled that Michels chose the Humane Society for his project.

"He is a remarkable young man and we are so honored to be the beneficiary of his work," she said.

Michels has excelled in school in addition to his efforts in the community. He is a member of his school's 360 Program, where a select group of eighth-graders mentors and tutors sixth-graders.

"He is a stellar student and a good role model," said Patty Patterson, a guidance counselor at Platt Middle School.

Michels will present his project to the school at an upcoming assembly, Patterson said.

Michels said he wants to do more projects like the one he did with the Humane Society, but doesn't have anything specific planned.

"I'd definitely like to do more for the environment," he said. "It's so important. This is our planet and however we treat it is how we are going to live with it for as long as humans are around."

As far as career plans, Michels said he wants to either work for a company like Google developing technology that changes the way people live -- or form a band and play guitar.

"It's one or the other, I haven't decided yet," he said.



Dustin Michels ( Picasa 3.0 )

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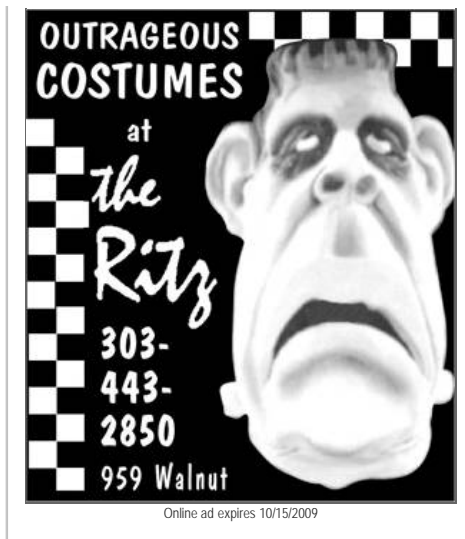
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