



GREEN ALTERNATIVES

An East End company offers several products to create custom energy-efficient solutions for homeowners

by **Bernadette Starzee**

When GreenLogic Energy began offering alternative energy solutions about three years ago, there was some resistance. "Customers would ask: Are these solar panels going to be visible?" said Nick Albukrek, one of the founding partners of the Bridgehampton-based company. "Now people want to show them off. I know one guy who takes his guests down to the basement so they can see his geothermal system."

Builders, too, were reticent in the beginning. "They did not want to have to deal with another subcontractor," Albukrek said. But, with soaring energy costs and home buyers demanding energy-efficient homes, builders have come around, he said.

Solar, geothermal, wind and green pool heating products are among the offerings of GreenLogic, which works with clients to create custom solutions to help them reduce their energy bills and, while they're at it, their carbon footprint. According to Albukrek, the company receives about two to three calls a week from homeowners, businesses, builders and architects.

Albukrek founded GreenLogic with a friend, Marc Cléjan, who shared his vision to do some good for the planet, and do it well. "We both ran successful companies before," said Albukrek, who built a textile machinery business after receiving an MBA from Columbia University. Cléjan left a real estate firm to earn his master's degree in environmental management at New York University. The partners feel their professionalism distinguishes them in the marketplace. "We show up on time and strive to take care of all our customers' needs," Albukrek said. This includes giving in-depth explanations of how the systems work and processing paperwork to secure permits from local authorities and rebates from LIPA.



Nick Albukrek and Marc Cléjan

The company said their suite of products also sets them apart. "We're not trying to push one product," Albukrek said. "We take a holistic approach. Some products are not right for some customers. If a new product becomes available, we can offer that, too."

When Cléjan and Albukrek were looking to start the business, they met with Gordian Raacke, the executive director of Renewable Energy Long Island, a not-for-profit organization based in East Hampton that promotes clean, sustainable energy use and generation for Long Island. According to Albukrek, Raacke advised them that, since most alternative energy companies were located mid-Island, serving homes priced at less than \$1 million, the company could step in and fill a niche servicing the \$1-million-plus market on the East End. The company has a satellite sales office on the North Fork and plans to open one at a mid-Island location during 2008.

Among the company's offerings are geothermal systems, which tap into the relatively

constant temperature of the earth below the frost line to efficiently cool and heat a home. These systems are not new but, as Albukrek pointed out, when oil cost \$20 a barrel, they received little attention. Now, with oil prices hovering near the \$100 mark, there is increased demand for them. Geothermal systems can cost about \$50,000 to \$60,000 to install, but they save 25 to 50 percent on heating and cooling costs. "The increase in oil prices means the payback period is faster," Albukrek said. Geothermal systems are particularly popular for new construction and since homeowners have to put in a heating and cooling system anyway they only have to factor the increased cost of the geothermal system versus a more traditional system. According to Albukrek, at today's prices, homeowners typically recoup the extra money spent within five to six years in the case of new construction, or about 10 years when a geothermal system is retrofitted to an existing house.

It is more common for a solar-electric system to be installed on an existing house. These systems use the energy from the sun to reduce or eliminate traditional electric use and, therefore, bills. LIPA offers generous rebates and, according to Albukrek, the payback period is about 10 years.

Small-wind systems are a less-used option, as there are more regulations as well as local resistance to the installation of the towers on residential properties. The company's pool-heating solution can allow customers to heat their pool at no cost and no environmental impact.

Cléjan and Albukrek counsel their clients that doing small things, like installing compact fluorescent light bulbs and more efficient windows and insulation, will lead to faster payback while decreasing a homeowner's environmental impact. "It's like losing weight," Albukrek said. "If you eat right and exercise, it will happen faster."