

# Gering family taps into solar power

By BART SCHANEMAN Assistant Editor | Posted: Saturday, November 8, 2014 4:00 pm

One Gering family hasn't had to pay an electricity bill in months.

While the Nemnichs do have a monthly loan payment for the large solar panels in their backyard, since July they've been powering their house with energy from the sun.

"We haven't used any of the city's energy since we went online," Vickie Nemnich said.

On an overcast morning, the solar panel was still producing energy, though not at an optimal rate. The Nemnichs expected that they would have to pay a little for their energy during the winter months.

Local businessman Larry Cooper of Nebraska Wind and Solar set them up with the system. It cost \$18,000, which they are paying back through a Nebraska Energy Office loan with a 2.25 percent interest rate. They've also received a 30 percent income tax credit worth about \$5,400 on the purchase.

Their monthly loan payment is less than their monthly electrical bill. They expect to pay off the panels in less than 10 years.

"It's a no-brainer," Bob Nemnich said. "We think that the biggest advantage is not necessarily what we're saving today but what we're going to be paying for electricity 10 years from now. Energy costs are going to go up."

He said that an interested homeowner would likely require space to set up the panels facing south/southeast. Their panels are adjustable, though that isn't required, so they can angle them according to the position of the sun, depending on the season. They have generated on average 900 kilowatts a month.

The city of Gering is tracking the energy they are banking via a reverse meter, but the Nemnichs aren't sure they'll get credit for the energy they save if they did bank it. And selling the excess energy back to the city doesn't work, either, as the city would be buying it at a wholesale price and reselling it back to them at a retail price. So right now they're content with generating enough energy during



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Bob and Vickie Nemnich stand with their recently installed solar panels. The Nemnichs have been generating more power than they are consuming since they put up the panels.

the day to compensate for what they use at night.

“We’re just happy we’re saving electricity,” Bob Nemnich said.

Their energy usage can be tracked online and with a smartphone app.

“Everyone who has the system can go online and see how they’re doing,” Vickie Nemnich said.

Knowing what part of the country they live in, they expect to have to weather a hail storm or two. For that, Bob Nemnich said, the panels are insurable, just like other structures.