

## Alumni deliver Solar on Eau Claire Schools

Solar on Eau Claire Schools, a project of the [Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation](#), [launched in December 2019](#), and raised more than \$291,000+ to fund the engineering design, installation, racking, and 25-year maintenance contract for two solar arrays of 360 solar panels each, atop both North and Memorial High Schools. All 720 panels for the project were donated by the [Couillard Solar Foundation](#) in partnership with [Midwest Renewable Energy Association](#). Couillard Solar Foundation was founded by Memorial alum Cal Couillard (1973).

The fundraising initiative was a grassroots success, despite the pandemic, with match challenges from [Pablo Foundation](#) and Left Coast Fund, care of [Hammond Climate Solutions](#). This success is also thanks to the support and work of many Old Abe alums, parents, and staff. The Solar on Eau Claire Schools Committee was co-chaired by Steve and Ellen Terwilliger, parents of Old Abe alums Hanna (2009) and Erika (2012). Terwilligers were champions of the project, promoting the value and importance of donating amongst their classmates. Additionally, each of Cal Couillard's seven siblings are MHS alums, and donors to the project: Lon Couillard (1972), Cathy Couillard (1974), Ty Couillard (1976), Lee Couillard (1977), Francine Couillard Kuhn (1981), Colette Couillard (1985), and Yvonne Couillard (1986). Additional Old Abe support for the project came from Amy Alpine (1967) and her husband, John Grump, who were not only generous donors but reached out to friends and helped secure a significant portion of funding.

Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation and Solar on Eau Claire Schools brought together 300 donors, aged 7 to 92, and from 15 states. Most had connections to our local schools, and all to our local community. One donor was a Norwegian exchange student, Daniel Habesland (2007) who now lives in the US. Both he and his parents, still in Norway, believed in and donated to the project.

Integral to the design and launch were [Lien & Peterson](#), partnered with [Next Step Energy](#). NSE owner, Zeus Stark's daughters attended Memorial High School as well. [Eagle Point Solar](#) of Dubuque, Iowa was named the installer for the project from Eau Claire Area School District's competitive bid process. Installation took place September and October, and arrays turned on in December.

Now turned on and operational, the solar arrays' performance is being incorporated into the STEM curriculum at the two high schools, exposing students to career opportunities in the environmental and solar industries. Memorial science teacher and Solar on Eau Claire Schools committee member, Erin Layde, is particularly excited for this new value add for the curriculum. In addition to the project's environmental benefit, it is also saving Eau Claire Area School District approximately \$20,000 a year in utility costs. Many thanks to each Old Abe who donated and helped make Solar on Eau Claire Schools possible.



*Hanna (2009) and Erika (2012) Terwilliger and pup Barley*



*December 2019: Daughter Elise Couillard, Cal Couillard, Ellen Terwilliger, Laurie Couillard at ECASD School Board meeting approving project.*



*February 2020: Steve and Ellen Terwilliger, Colette Couillard – fundraising at Decadent Cabaret music event*



*October 2020 Ribbon cutting event. From Left Kneeling: ECASD Superintendent Mike Johnson, Memorial alum Kiersten Wille (2020), ECPSF Board President Jim McDougall, Memorial science teacher Erin Layde(1992), North science teacher, Jake Behrens. From Left Standing: School Board President Dr. Tim Nordin, Couillard Solar Foundation trustee Claire Couillard Lindstrom, Solar on Eau Claire Schools committee co-chairs Ellen and Steve Terwilliger, ECPSF Executive Director Sarah French.*