

# COMMUNITY

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## Kits convert golf carts to solar power

Bonita company changes attitudes

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A Bonita Springs company is making it possible to go green on the green — golf carts are going solar.

Gulf City Solar sells portable, solar-power products, and with a partnership with Lakeland-based Golf Ventures, will be the exclusive distributor of its solar kit for golf carts. Golf Ventures supplies golf clubs and individuals with turf and cart-related equipment.

Gulf City Solar's ultra-light solar panel is made of a flexible, rollable thin film. It can be attached to the roof of a golf cart using attached heavy duty double-sided tape. It can also be removed without leaving a trace, if necessary.

Most kits on the market use heavy glass panels to capture solar energy and may require a golf cart roof to be replaced. Gulf City Solar's kit also operates up to 30 percent more efficiently than other kits.

How does it do that?

"That's proprietary information," said Hans Holzmann, Gulf City Solar's executive vice president, with a half-serious chuckle. "Everybody wants to know it. Golf cart manufacturers say it cannot work, that they know all about it. But when we put it on golf carts, it works."

"That's our biggest hurdle. People can't believe it works."

People have to change their mentality for it to work, he said. They should only install the solar panel on golf carts with new batteries, and they can't store the cart in the barn or



Coconut Point mall operations manager John Kennedy, in the driver's seat, said the mall will initially install Gulf City Solar's kit on one of its golf carts. Shoppers will be able to identify this "green machine" by its decorative decals, but that will be the only giveaway.

PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

### TO REACH THEM

For more information, visit Gulf City Solar at 24951 Old 41 Road, Unit 12, Bonita Springs, call 947-1856, email [info@gulfcitysolar.com](mailto:info@gulfcitysolar.com) or visit [gulfcitysolar.com](http://gulfcitysolar.com).

away from the sun all the time.

"This is solar. It's charged outside by the sun only" Holzmann said. "People put it in a barn, it's not getting charged.

Golf cart batteries get worn in about 1 1/2 years, when sulfation starts.

If the solar panel is placed in a new golf cart, there is almost no sulfation and can last six years or more.

"If they put solar on 50 carts, they probably save \$60,000 to 90,000, net savings, in the first three years," Holzmann said.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for golf courses. They are struggling anyways to reduce costs these days. This is why we are particularly focusing on golf."

For those who still don't believe it, try shopping at Estero's Coconut Point to see one of these solar carts driving around the parking lot.

"We are interested in finding ways to be more energy efficient and were intrigued by how light, yet powerful, Gulf City Solar's product is," mall manager Jamie Grofik said.

Gulf City Solar's ultra-portable and light solar kit for golf carts is its first major product being sold widely to country clubs and individual people.

Unlike solar kits that use heavy glass panels or require cart owners to replace their roofs, Gulf

City Solar's kit uses a thin film-like panel weighing about nine pounds. Owners can peel off the double-sided tape and stick the panel onto their carts. The regulator that controls energy production and flow distributes energy up to 30 percent more efficiently than its competitors, and constantly recharges a cart's battery, enabling more drive time and less reliance on electricity.

"I'm glad we could support a local business in this way, and I also look forward to having one less cart to plug in," said John Kennedy, the mall's operations manager. "When you think about the number of vehicles large operations like ours use, the savings could be huge if these solar kits are installed on entire fleets."



### ALSO

Pelican Bay is inaugurating a new solar/electric tram system from Sarasota-based Eco-Trans Alliance and Cruise Car Inc., effectively using the sun to provide residents, members and guests more than 800,000 rides annually.

Each new solar tram will feature the Alliance's 460-watt onboard solar charging system, which produces more than 400 kilowatts of electricity annually directly from the sun, reducing Pelican Bay's carbon footprint by more than 500 pounds of carbon dioxide annually for each tram. Pelican Bay is replacing its entire tram fleet with the solar trams, which is about 40. That means the community will reduce more than 22,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Pelican Bay Tram Station No. 5 is at 6801 Pelican Bay Blvd. in Pelican Bay, Naples, at the Sandpiper Beach Club.