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## Wind power: Urbana business installs county's first windmill

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URBANA -- Mountainside Challenge and Retreat Center is [Frederick](#) County's first business to take on wind [power](#), according to owner Joe Richardson.

The 80-foot tower for the 10-kilowatt windmill was installed Tuesday, raised by a hydraulic lift.

It took hours to get the windmill ready, although the blades were lifted into place in only a few minutes.

Richardson has been planning to put wind energy at the [Urbana location](#) for several years. Last spring, he ushered John Darnell, energy and environment project coordinator for U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, who represents [Frederick](#) County, around his property and pointed out where he hoped to build his windmill.

Tuesday, that dream became a reality.

"We consume about 100,000 kilowatts (of electricity) a year at Mountainside," Richardson said. "We were hoping this will reduce that by 30 percent, but we've been told it may reduce that by 50 percent."

The windmill will gather power from the windy hillside and convert that energy into electricity. Cables will send the energy into the local power grid, which will in turn [credit](#) Mountainside with the electricity.

Mountainside hosts school field trips and a nature-focused summer day camp for [children](#), as well as corporate retreats.

Richardson bought the windmill from Potomac Wind Energy in Dickerson. ReDriven, a Canadian company, built the components, while the tower and base were made in China.

The type of windmill being installed at Mountainside is for areas with relatively low wind levels, according to Trevor Riopelle, ReDriven's spokesman. Richardson said Mountainside's ridgetop location provides fairly steady 10 to 20 mph winds.

"In the course of one day, we installed the base, leveled it and used a hydraulic system to lift the blades," Riopelle said at Tuesday's installation.

"These aren't Tinkertoys," he said. "These are large, healthy systems."

The system costs about \$22,000, without the cost of the tower. Much of that cost can be recouped through tax credits and [savings](#) on electric bills.

Richardson is also having a solar array installed at Mountainside, a former farm that is four miles from Sugarloaf Mountain. The retreat uses composting toilets. He is planning to have a meeting center built with eco-friendly materials and geothermal heating and cooling.

A cistern collects rainwater for gardens, and water washed down the drain is collected, also for use in the gardens.

Richardson was excited on Tuesday. "This is my baby," he said. "I've wanted this for a while."



Photo by Graham Cullen

Trevor Riopelle of ReDriven Power Inc. installs a cap to a 10-kilowatt windmill Tuesday before it was raised by a hydraulic lift into position at Mountainside Challenge and Retreat Center in Urbana.



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