

Media Contacts:

Jennifer Guild
Science Museum of Virginia
(804) 864-1401
jguild@smv.org

Erik Curren
Secure Futures Solar
(540) 466-6128
erik@securefutures.solar

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

High Schoolers from Richmond City and Augusta County Honored by U.S. Department of Energy

Students Present Research on Solar Power and Energy Efficiency as Part of University-Level Solar Decathlon Program

Staunton, Va., December 17, 2020 – Students from Open High School in Richmond and Fort Defiance High School in Augusta County made presentations yesterday in an online event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon,[®] a collegiate competition that highlights student innovations in solar power and energy efficiency.

Student research came out of the Throwing Solar Shade[®] program, which paired students at the two schools for hands-on research in the emerging field of how clean energy technologies relate to temperatures in their local environment. The program was sponsored and organized by Secure Futures Solar, based in Staunton, Va., the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond, Va., and the National Energy Education Development (NEED) project, a non-profit organization based in Manassas, Va. Students worked with the guidance of the museum’s Chief Scientist Jeremy Hoffman, while NEED provided curriculum support to the teachers.

“Throwing Solar Shade is powerful because it helps students connect science theory with real-life experiments and resiliency strategies they can apply in their communities,” said Hoffman. “By including youth, the work builds social cohesion and helps train the future green workforce. I enjoy working with teenagers to learn more about the science of climate change because they understand how it will impact their future and are passionate about taking action now. Working on this initiative has made me a stronger science communicator because I’ve heard directly from the teens about what matters to them and to their community.”

The event featured presentations by four students who participated in the pilot rollout of the Throwing Solar Shade curriculum in 2019-2020:

- **Caroline Miller**, Fort Defiance High School, Augusta County, “Maximizing Thermophotovoltaic (TPV) Cell Efficiency”

- **Sherylynne Crookshanks**, Fort Defiance High School, Augusta County, “Paint Before You Park”
- **Jack Salgado**, Open High School, Richmond Public Schools, “Direct vs. Indirect Bandgap in Solar Panels”
- **Lauren Rhodes**, Fort Defiance High School, Augusta County, “Solar Turkeys: Converting Poultry Houses to Solar Energy”

“Since the Solar Decathlon is a competition intended for college students, we are especially proud of our high schoolers for connecting with this prestigious program,” said Anthony Smith, President and Founder of Secure Futures. “They’re getting a head start on the kind of collaboration between educational institutions and businesses that has produced some of the most useful research across technical fields, including solar power.”

“Helping students find their voice through science and exploration is one of the most authentic ways to learn,” said Mary Spruill, Executive Director of NEED.

“We are so proud of our students and their work in the *Throwing Solar Shade Program*,” said RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras. “We are grateful for Secure Futures, the Science Museum of Virginia, and Ms. Emily Betts (Science Teacher, Open High) for providing our students with opportunities, such as the Solar Decathlon, to showcase their amazing talents and creativity.”

“We are extremely proud of the work our students have invested in their solar projects,” said Dr. Eric Bond, Superintendent of Augusta County Public Schools. “The learning and experiences gained from their involvement in the Throwing Solar Shade project truly reflect the 21st century learning we desire for our students. Many thanks to Secure Futures, the Science Museum of Virginia, and Fort Defiance High School teacher Cindy Schroer for making these amazing opportunities available to our students!”

*** More information available at <https://tinyurl.com/yb28zp6z> ***

About the Science Museum of Virginia

From virtual presentations featuring STEM experts to fun videos on social media to in-person experiential exhibits, the Science Museum of Virginia looks for all opportunities to inspire Virginians to enrich their lives through science. Helping curious minds discover the connections between—and their connection to—science, technology, engineering and math guides Museum staff in all they do. Learn more at www.smv.org or call 804.864.1400.

About NEED

The NEED Project designs and delivers teacher-tested educational materials, evaluation techniques and tools, recognition of student achievement, and professional development for educators. NEED materials and training programs provide comprehensive, objective information about the scientific concepts of energy and the sources of energy – their use and their impact on the environment, the economy and society. design and deliver objective, multi-sided energy education programs. Learn more at www.need.org.

About Secure Futures, LLC

As a market and policy leader, Secure Futures builds, owns, manages and funds affordable *Resilient Solar Solutions*[®] for hospitals, schools and businesses. Headquartered in Staunton, Va., the company combines state-of-the-art solar technology with an innovative business model to make commercial scale solar readily affordable in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast, helping customers to realize the economic, environmental, and community benefits of solar energy. In 2017, Secure Futures became a Certified B Corporation[®], having met the exacting standards for social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability established by the nonprofit B Lab[®]. For more information: www.securefutures.solar.

###