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SALINAS CA - On Tuesday, August 15, 2023, Congressman Jimmy Panetta visited Rancho Cielo Youth Campus for a ceremonial groundbreaking of the Rancho Cielo Solar Project. The three goals of this project are: (1) to build on Rancho Cielo's dedication to going green, (2) to cut energy costs for Rancho Cielo Youth Campus, and (3) to teach Rancho students about clean energy.

During his speech at the event, Congressman Panetta shared information on the Inflation Reduction Act, a bill that he helped author and one that has been instrumental in making the Rancho Cielo Solar Project a reality.

"In that act, there is this clean energy tax credit that was extended by Congress, through the IRA, that allows Rancho Cielo to offset the cost of this project by 30%," says Congressman Panetta. Rancho Cielo Board Chair Janine Chicourrat encouraged Congressman Panetta to include that 30% rebate for nonprofits during a visit to Washington DC.

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, adding solar to the Rancho Cielo campus has become a reality. This will also benefit the Rancho Cielo Ag Technology & Mechatronics students as they get hands-on experience with solar installation.

"The project is going to allow Rancho Cielo students the training that they are going to need to learn how to install these types of clean energy projects - not just here on campus - but throughout our community," says Congressman Panetta.

According to Rancho Cielo CEO Chris Devers, the solar system itself cost \$650,000, with the rebate provided by the Inflation Reduction Act covering \$200,000 of that total cost. Once the solar system is installed, it will greatly reduce Rancho's hefty \$100,000/year electricity bill, with an estimated five-year breakeven point. In 25 years, Rancho Cielo estimates to save approximately \$3,000,000 in electricity costs.

Scudder Solar has been contracted to build the new solar system and Don Chapin will be prepping the groundwork. CEO of Scudder Solar, Pete Scudder, reviewed the project specs during the event.

"This is a 200 kilowatt system with 420 panels covering over 13,000 square feet, including the roof and ground mount system," says Scudder.

After the speeches, Congressman Panetta, Rancho Cielo Founder Judge John Phillips, CEO of Rancho Cielo Chris Devers, CEO of Scudder Solar Pete Scudder, Rancho Cielo Board Chair Janine Chicourrat, and Rancho Cielo Board Member Chris Lopez went to the site of the project for a ceremonial groundbreaking.

About Rancho Cielo Youth Campus:

Rancho Cielo's mission is to invest in all young people facing challenges for success through diploma education, vocational training, counseling, and life skills development in a safe and affirming environment. With a focus on serving the community, Rancho Cielo currently supports over 200 students, with 78% hailing from Salinas, and 94% identifying as Latino. The organization equips graduates with the skills, resilience, and determination to thrive in a rapidly changing and culturally diverse society, fostering their health, happiness, and economic freedom.

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