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Contact: Matt Abele, Manager of Marketing & Communications
mattabele@energync.org | 704-658-6265

NC Sustainable Energy Association Announces Clean Energy Leadership Award Winners
Organizations, businesses, and individuals recognized for significant contributions to clean energy deployment and policy advancement

RALEIGH, N.C. – Today, NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) announced the recipients of its annual clean energy leadership awards. Awarded were selected amongst a pool of more than 500 member organizations and individuals creating significant contributions to an affordable and accessible clean energy economy in the state of North Carolina. Awards were announced in each of the following categories: Sustainable Energy Business of the Year, Individual Sustainable Energy Leader of the Year, Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainable Energy, and Sustainable Energy Project of the Year Awards.

“Each year, North Carolina clean energy organizations raise the bar of excellence for commitments and deployments that create jobs, economic development, and resilience. We’re grateful to have the opportunity to engage and interact with many of the individual, business, organization, and government leaders that continue to advance North Carolina to the top of the clean energy leaderboard,” according to Ward Lenz, Executive Director of NC Sustainable Energy Association. “NCSEA is proud to recognize many of the market leaders accelerating the transition towards an affordable, accessible, and reliable clean energy future for all North Carolinians.”

The outstanding organizations and individuals receiving awards this year include:

Robinson Consulting Group, winner of the Sustainable Energy Business of the Year Award: Robinson Consulting Group has been instrumental to the advancement of strong clean energy policies and regulation in the state of North Carolina by maintaining close contact and regularly communicating with legislators, state agencies, and utility commissioners. Julie Robinson and her team have been actively involved in state and federal energy policy development for over twenty years helping to cement North Carolina’s role as a national clean energy leader. They’ve walked hand in hand with NCSEA’s Policy team to help advance numerous clean energy wins in 2021, including comprehensive energy legislation and various executive orders from the Governor. Their collective network and intel has been instrumental to creating a collaborative and constructive ecosystem when working on clean energy issues.

Kairos Government Affairs, winner of the Sustainable Energy Business of the Year Award: The Kairos Government Affairs team, consisting of Betsy McCorkle and Scott Laster, have been critical partners in building bipartisan support for clean energy through their years of tireless work at the North Carolina General Assembly. Thanks to their intimate understanding of North Carolina’s political environment and strong relationships with decisionmakers, our state has seen numerous significant clean energy policy advancements, including HB589 and HB951: Energy Solutions for North Carolina.

Christina Cress, winner of the Individual Sustainable Energy Leader of the Year Award: Christina Cress, Partner at Bailey & Dixon, has established herself as one of the most prominent and respected attorneys in North Carolina focused on clean energy related issues. Christina was instrumental in facilitating collaborative dialogue between the business and clean energy community throughout the process of negotiating HB951. She has also built a wide network of followers to expand awareness of clean energy technologies and related issues through her social media accounts, including on Twitter at @cress_cd.
Ajulo Othow, winner of the Diversity & Inclusion in Sustainable Energy Award: Ajulo Othow is the Founder and CEO of EnerWealth Solutions, a black owned solar and energy storage company that seeks to advance an ecologically sustainable world, where all electricity is generated by clean distributed renewables, and economic prosperity is shared by all, especially those who have historically been left behind by America’s success. As part of her community wealth efforts, Ajulo has partnered with Roanoke Electric Cooperative via their Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Project to help African-American landowners in northeastern North Carolina keep land in their family and generate income through solar energy. Ajulo Othow is an attorney and member-manager of the Law Offices of Ajulo E. Othow, PLLC, and a Board member at the Center for Progressive Reform.

Grissom Solar - Pine Gate Renewables, winner of the Energy Storage Project of the Year Award: Grissom Solar is a 6.9 megawatt solar and storage project located in Enfield, NC, generating enough energy to power approximately 986 homes annually. This project reached a commercial operation date in 2021 and is one of 12 projects in a solar plus storage portfolio expected to be fully operational by the end of 2022. The portfolio consists of 10 megawatt-hours of storage to dispatch power during peak hours and provide critical ancillary services to ensure the reliability of the electric grid.

Timbermill Wind - Apex Clean Energy, winner of the Wind Project of the Year Award: Apex Clean Energy is developing Timbermill Wind, a utility-scale wind energy project located in rural Chowan County. This project is expected to have a capacity of up to 189 megawatts with 45 wind turbines, enough to power 47,000 homes annually. In the near term, the project will provide construction jobs and new revenues from local purchasing of materials and services. In the long term, the project is expected to bring sustained tax revenue to the counties for local governments and schools, as well as 30 years of local purchasing, employment, and investment. Farmers who host wind turbines and other participating landowners will also receive annual lease payments. These payments will continue over the projected 30-year lifespan of the wind farm, injecting millions of dollars into Chowan County’s economy to support local merchants, contractors, and equipment suppliers.

Oak City Baptist Church - Eagle Solar & Light, winner of the Rooftop Solar Project of the Year Award: Eagle Solar & Light installed a 42 kilowatt rooftop solar system at Oak City Baptist Church in Raleigh, a church community founded in 1865. The system will produce approximately 59,000 kilowatt hours, saving Oak City Baptist an estimated $4,700 in yearly utility costs. Over its life, the system will produce clean energy comparable to 340 tons of waste being recycled instead of landfilled annually and will offset more than 1.1 million pounds of coal burned, according to estimates by the Environmental Protection Agency. Oak City Baptist will receive a $27,000 rebate toward its installation through Duke Energy’s solar rebate program. This installation is a significant milestone in bringing energy justice to low-and moderate-income communities of faith.

Hawtree Creek Farm Solar - Carolina Solar Energy, winner of the Utility-Scale Solar Project of the Year Award: Earlier this year, Carolina Solar Energy’s Hawtree Creek Farm Solar project located in Warrenton, North Carolina reached commercial operation date. This expansive 85 megawatt DC project is interconnected in PJM territory. It also stands to provide a significant source of property tax revenue for Warren County. To date, Carolina Solar Energy has developed more than 800 megawatts of projects in operation or under construction. This is another example of their commitment to the North Carolina market by driving clean energy economy within our state.

Lovill House Inn - O2 Group Ventures, winner of the Building Performance/Energy Efficiency Project of the Year Award: Built in 1875, the Lovill House Inn is an historic 11-acre Bed and Breakfast located just a half mile from downtown Boone and Appalachian State University’s campus. In 2021, the Lovill House was renovated to become a model of sustainability, efficiency, and luxury in the hospitality...
industry. Investments were made to install solar and battery technology for off-grid operations, while also making upgrades to the lighting, climate control, and ventilation systems. Clean energy and sustainability is core to the identity of the upgraded property, even down to the solar carport allowing visitors to charge their electric vehicles during their stay.

**Halifax EV Fast Charger Pilot - Roanoke Electric Cooperative**, winner of the *Electric Vehicle Project of the Year Award*: Roanoke Electric Cooperative unveiled its first rapid charging station for electric vehicles in its service territory earlier this year at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Halifax, N.C. This charging location will allow drivers commuting across I-95 and throughout Northeast North Carolina to fully charge their vehicles in approximately 30 minutes. Even more innovative and unique about the project is the ability of the charging station to operate without access to three-phase power. The project incorporates the new EdgeEV70 technology to generate solid three-phase power on site from existing single-phase infrastructure. This pilot project sets a precedent for installation of rapid EV charging infrastructure throughout rural communities in NC and beyond.

**Robert Powell**, winner of the *Lifetime Achievement Award*: Professor Robert “Bob” Powell of North Carolina A&T University has spent decades advocating and advancing clean energy across the region. Bob helped to develop one of the first passive solar projects east of the Mississippi and has since held numerous leadership roles in the clean energy space, including as the Chief of the Technical Section of the State Energy Division, and with his own firm focused on community design. He previously served as the Chair of NCSEA’s Board of Directors, and currently serves on the boards of Advanced Energy Corporation, NC GreenPower, and the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro. Bob is an Associate Professor at North Carolina A&T University, where he dedicates much of his time and research to the topics of sustainable energy development and innovation and entrepreneurship.

NCSEA extends our congratulations and sincerest thanks to our members and the 2021 award winners. To find out more about the awardees, visit [https://vimeo.com/nccleanenergy](https://vimeo.com/nccleanenergy).

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**About North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association**

North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that drives public policy and market development for clean energy. Our work enables clean energy jobs, economic opportunities, and affordable energy options for North Carolinians. Learn more about NCSEA, our mission, and our vision at [www.energync.org](http://www.energync.org).