

New Hampshire

Business Programs • Rural Energy for America Program

Shine ‘n’ Rise: Orchard Hill Breadworks Illuminates Community

Noah Elbers grew up a few miles down the road from where his world-renowned bakery and eatery, Orchard Hill Breadworks, sits today in Alstead, NH. Recently, he secured a \$31,245 grant from USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to build a 32.5kW solar array where his grandparents had lived since 1972. Before he and his family cleared out the space to transform a dusty, 19th-century barn on their property into one of *Food & Wine’s* 100 Best Bakeries in America, the structure had been a playland for him, his siblings and cousins, who would build forts and climb in the rafters above the hay loft.

REAP grants help farmers, producers and rural small businesses improve energy efficiency, and integrate renewable energy systems into their operations.

While Noah didn’t have a long term vision for what would become of the space when he—a highschooler at the time—helped his father resurrect it, the decisions they made then laid the groundwork for what stands now. Noah and his company reflect a vision of sustainability, shared health and service to one another, inspired by a childhood surrounded by people who invested in their community.

Parents and other adults in Noah’s life actively built relationships that added to the vitality of their hometown. The way he runs his business and treats his staff—as well as his decision to go 100% solar—reflects the vibrant community spirit he witnessed in his childhood. As an independent small businessman, he’s putting into practice the selfless service he saw from his parents and grandparents and their friends, proving that the acts of giving multiply in real time and through generations.

“We hope that by our example, other businesspeople and neighbors consider the possibility of using renewable energy,” says Noah, who will save \$6,400/year with the new array. “The art of working well as a team is at least as important as the craft of turning flour into bread. And so it is with community: in order to get the product we want, it’s essential to work together by acting outside of ourselves and within our mutual best interest. We’re very proud to be solar powered.”



Above: The Orchard Hill Breadworks staff applies an ethos of teamwork to their craft and community relationships; Below: A 19th-century barn once owned by Noah Elbers’ grandparents houses the world-famous bakery & eatery.

Obligation Amount: \$31,245 REAP grant

Date of Obligation: July 9, 2021

Congressional District: Representative Kuster, District 2 NH; Senators Shaheen and Hassan

Impact: This \$31,245 Rural Energy for America Program grant will save Orchard Hill Breadworks and Founder Noah Elbers \$6,400 a year, furthering the company’s vision of providing healthy food to the community with minimal impact on the environment.