April 22, 2020

On this 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, UHAB and Solar One hope this message finds you safe and healthy. As the staff of our organizations work remotely in an effort against the spread of COVID-19, we are working hard to support the affordable housing community in the move towards a renewable and sustainable future.

In the face of COVID-19, we witness how our community is resilient and strong. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed stark inequities. Across the country we see how Black and Latinx communities are impacted by COVID-19, and the disproportionate rates of coronavirus-related deaths for these communities is tragic and sobering. Environmental racism and air pollution has caused underlying health conditions like asthma for many New Yorkers. Coronavirus reminds us that crises deepen existing inequalities, and disproportionately harm those on the front lines.

Many HDFC shareholders have told us stories of resilience and mutual aid, as neighbors look out for the seniors in their community and arrange to get groceries, prescriptions and supplies for others; as shareholders leave each other care packages with soap; as boards and shareholders place morale-boosting signs of support for service workers and essential workers in their common areas; and as families look out for one another and check in to keep each other healthy and safe. We are inspired by stories that we hear, and we are filled with grief hearing from residents about how they are impacted by the virus and changing economic situations. Our hearts go out to them during this trying time.

HDFC co-ops exist today because resident leaders played a pivotal role in improving their cooperative community and taking ownership of their own future. HDFCs are installing rooftop solar panels for the exact same reason. The Co-ops Go Solar campaign is providing free assistance to HDFCs to install solar. Through Solar Uptown Now and Co-ops Go Solar, nearly 30 HDFCs have become solar-powered, and we are just getting started.

This week, to honor these co-ops for their environmental leadership, UHAB and Solar One are featuring the story of a solar-powered HDFC every day, along with actions that can be taken from the safety of your home to fight for a livable earth for all. We may be apart, but our community is coming together to demand a just response to both COVID-19 and climate change through the Climate Works for All campaign. We are featuring the residents of 128 West 138 Street HDFC, 45-53 West 110 Street HDFC, 470 Convent Avenue HDFC, 310-12 West 122 Street HDFC and 416 West 129 Street HDFC. These residents have banded together to build community support for solar power and to secure a lower price for everyone through collective purchasing. By installing solar, New York’s HDFCs are reducing their expenses, creating solar installation jobs for local residents, leading the fight against climate change, and standing up for environmental justice.

This week, let’s do our part to keep our neighbors safe and communities strong. Let’s honor our medical workers, delivery workers, grocery workers, transit workers, and sanitation workers who are on the frontlines. Let’s honor the memories of those we’ve lost. And let’s honor future generations by paving the way towards a more sustainable NYC.

In cooperation,

Emily Ng, Director of Member Services
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Noah Ginsburg, Director, Here Comes Solar
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