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Fairmont, WV, 26554. **Spreading sunlight: connecting communities with solar
energy research.**

Students of all ages across West Virginia are being recruited to help with solar energy research. Fairmont State University is the headquarters of the West Virginia Brigade of the Solar Army, which is searching for cheap, abundant metal-oxide combinations that can help sunlight make clean-burning hydrogen fuel from water. Our lab has been adapting and refining sample preparation methods for informal settings. Community outreach involving family units, local schools, our campus community, and other organizations has reinforced the citizen-science mission of the Solar Army. Expanding community engagement introduces students and other individuals to renewable energy and provides a unique opportunity to conduct scientific research and contribute to the betterment of society. Student-friendly instruments known as SHaRK (Solar Hydrogen Activity research Kit, University of Wyoming) and SEAL (Solar Energy Activity Lab, California Institute of Technology) are used to test samples. Our techniques, explanations, and website are improving by seeking viewpoints from groups beyond our headquarters. Through advertisements, workshops, demonstrations, and focus on communication and easy-access materials, we are bridging the gaps between our campus, our collaborators, and the general public.