

North American Board of  
**NABCEP**  
Certified Energy Practitioners®



# ***Faces*** of **NABCEP**

Dear Reader,

The following profiles of NABCEP Certificants is intended to introduce the reader to the diverse range of jobs and responsibilities NABCEP Certificants hold within their professional fields. It is clear from the profiles that the common elements they share are commitment and passion for high quality renewable energy installations. These profiles are part of an on-going series and more will be added on a regular basis. Visit the NABCEP website to read more profiles as they are added.

We at NABCEP hope that reading these profiles will help the reader understand the value of the Certifications that these individuals and hundreds like them have earned through their combination of work experience, training and rigorous testing. They truly do represent some of the industry's best practitioners.

If you are a consumer or employer, be sure to look for NABCEP credentials when hiring renewable energy practitioners. If you are a practitioner we encourage you to join the ranks of those who have distinguished themselves by achieving NABCEP Certification.

Sincerely,



Ezra Auerbach  
Executive Director

## NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

# John Koontz



**John Koontz** is a Senior Project Manager with HelioSage, LLC located in Charlottesville, Virginia. He says, “it is important for the project manager to know all aspects of the project, from initial customer contact to final installation and sign off by inspectors.”

Since entering the solar industry, John has been continuously educating himself about solar design and installation. He says, “NABCEP certification allows individuals to have recognition for their solar experience. As well, it has enabled me to use the same language as engineers and other electrical professionals working in the PV industry.”

In 2006, John’s first child was born. It was at that same time that he began to reconsider the notion of sustainability. After some soul searching he realized, “I was not using my career to further my vision of a more sustainable society.” So he looked around for some way to make a difference and liked what he found out about solar energy. Entering the solar industry became a “labor of love” as he initially agreed to a pay cut to gain experience in the PV industry.

Wanting to improve his knowledge about all aspects of solar energy he took numerous classes on PV. In 2008 John took a seven day NABCEP Entry Level course and exam. “It was not long after completing that coursework, that I received calls, from co-workers and industry peers requesting help with projects.”

John wanted to increase his knowledge about solar installations and receive recognition of his effort. “Originally, I thought it looked unobtainable, since I hadn’t spent much time as supervisor on installations. But I was invited to do more of this work on the side. I studied very hard; got all of the necessary prerequisites and sat for the NABCEP PV Installer exam. I passed on my first try.”

After being certified he was able to transition into his current Senior Project Manager position at HelioSage. “The NABCEP logo on my resume has been very important in advancing my career.”

HelioSage is very happy to have an in-house NABCEP certificant. When making commercial sales calls it provides a leg-up on the competition. “Commercial customers have a great interest in NABCEP certification since they are looking for reassurance and accountability for the work done on their property. As HelioSage typically offers PPA’s to commercial hosts, the NABCEP certification is also helpful in building confidence with tax equity investors who might own the commercial projects HelioSage develops.”

John also enjoys the camaraderie he shares with other NABCEP certificants. “I have a group of associates around the country who I can direct friends and clients to if they need expert advice on solar projects in an area that isn’t a fit for HelioSage.”

When asked, John said he would like to add one more requirement for certification. “The applicant should demonstrate that they have reached out to building inspectors and code officials to educate them about PV installations. Code officials are often seeing their first solar installations and can bring a project to a sudden halt if they are uncertain about any aspect of the installation. What’s more, there are many installations that are being done by people who haven’t had the necessary training. NABCEP certainly goes a long way in preserving the quality of the PV installations code officials will be reviewing.”

John plans to be in the solar industry for many years to come and, when asked if he would recertify, stated definitely, “Yes!”

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## Rob Wilson



**Rob Wilson** is the Manager of Engineering and Construction at Solar Power Partners, Inc. located in Mill Valley, California. Solar Power Partners, Inc. develops, owns and operates distributed commercial and utility solar energy facilities, and sells solar-generated electricity through solar Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). Rob oversees the engineering and technical side of projects from the initial client contact to guiding it through installation and commissioning.

“I was recruited into the solar industry because of my experience with heavy construction, including roads and underground fuel system installations. A solar integration company wanted my construction knowledge for large, solar commercial projects. At that point, I didn’t even know what PV meant,” Rob said.

“My current boss asked me to get NABCEP certified because banks like to do business with companies that have personnel who have obtained independent certifications like NABCEP and LEEDS. A NABCEP certification says that a person knows what works and what doesn’t on a PV job.”

Rob found that studying for the exam became an education in itself. “Every day, I applied knowledge gained from studying to the job I was working on. After four to five months of studying, I felt ready to take the NABCEP exam and passed. It was the hardest exam I have ever taken.”

As part of his job, Rob makes presentations to many diverse groups. “My NABCEP certification gives me the gravitas to make statements about solar projects and installations and have them stand. When presenting to potential customers, I am perceived as providing the straight goods and not just doing a sales job.”

Solar Power Partners has benefited from having a NABCEP certificant on the payroll. “NABCEP certification helps greatly with banks. The bank will ask for technical information when they are reviewing a project to finance and our finance staff will ask me. Host customers are often comforted to know that a NABCEP installer is on the job. In addition, more large scale customers are requiring personnel with NABCEP certification in their Request for Proposal documents.”

Rob is the volunteer Chair of NABCEP’s Company Accreditation Technical Committee. “I work on the Company Accreditation Committee because I believe that a company needs to have accreditation to show corporate competence just like individuals do now with NABCEP certification.”

“Yes, I will be recertifying. The knowledge you gain and the respect you receive as a NABCEP Certified Installer are well worth it.”

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## Jessica Baldwin



**Jessica Baldwin** operates Solar Plumbing Design (SPD) in New York City. She is a hands-on plumber who oversees two crews installing residential, solar thermal (ST) installations from New York City to Albany.

“I have had a long term interest in sustainable living which was passed on to me by my parents. At age 21, I built an off-grid cabin in the Catskills on which I installed a PV system. From there, I moved to the city and began training for a plumbing contractor’s license. When I discovered that I could use my plumbing skills to install ST systems, my two life interests came together in a meaningful way.”

“While doing research about ST, I became aware of NABCEP’s certification process and the importance of that certification for knowing how ST systems work. The extreme value of the NABCEP certification is that it sets you apart from others in the field.”

Although it took Jessica two tries to pass the certification exam, she says, “I was willing to write it twice since this is my life interest not just a hobby. This certification gives me the edge since no other certification says I have explicit

knowledge and experience with ST. This specificity sets down an immediate basis of trust with the customer. My clients save a ton of headaches because they know the job will be done correctly.”

“As well my NABCEP certification proves that I am capable of understanding solar thermal design parameters and can assess the proper materials to use on the job. Since my certification, the designers I work with treat me with more respect and listen to my opinions about designs before they are put on the roof.”

“From a business perspective, I am more likely to get a job over someone without the NABCEP certification. More job requests now call for NABCEP certification up front.”

“I find there is an instant rapport and trust between certificant holders. The exam is so rigorous that I am proud when my colleagues pass.”

“The only thing I would like to add to the exam is a question or two about ethical standards. I look forward to seeing if that happens when I recertify.”

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## Steve Fulgham



**Steve Fulgham** is the Chief Executive Officer of Ambassador Energy located in Murrieta, California. Ambassador Energy is a solar training, support and distribution company, serving its family of Agencies through their Business-in-a-Box business model. Some of their services include: solar design and installation; business assistance; marketing support and brand-agnostic equipment distribution.

Steve started his work life in the computer industry, and when the commute became too harsh, he became a General Contractor in his hometown. When tax credits and incentives made renewable energy a viable option for residential building, he began putting solar systems on his building projects. "I started putting solar systems on houses and noticed that they all sold, even in a development where non-solar homes didn't."

"I became exposed to the importance of NABCEP when I was bidding on a large project in Texas. The Request For Proposal [RFP] required that either a NABCEP certificant or Master Texas Electrician be on the job site. To get this job, I would have to get NABCEP certified or I was out of the running. Since then, more and more states are requiring NABCEP certification in order to get full incentive credits," Steve explained. "I have found that, in regard to solar knowledge, a NABCEP certification carries the most weight of all licenses and certifications around the country. I liken the difference to earning a four-year degree vs. becoming a doctor."

Steve spent 80–100 hours on extra book studying in order to qualify for the exam. He passed on the first try. "This test is so good because it crosses so many boundaries. You need to know the National Electric Code, OSHA regulations, electrical circuitry and solar design."

"A NABCEP certification brings credibility to me, Ambassador Energy and our family of Authorized Agencies around the country. It's an elite group. In fact, there are fewer NABCEP certificants in this country than there are professional football players."

"We are seeing more and more that jobs are requiring NABCEP certification in order to win them and/or qualify for the maximum rebates. We are actively planning to have all of our field management team certified so that we may lead our Agencies by example. In addition, we intend to have everyone in our office take the NABCEP Entry Level exam so that the entire company has solid solar knowledge."

"While we provide incentive bonuses to employees who pass certifications, personal competitiveness takes over and everyone wants to get a higher level certificate. Multiple levels of certifications from NABCEP would be welcomed by our work force."

"I would recertify for NABCEP every year if I could. While other certification agencies offer a standard, NABCEP is the standard for the renewable energy industry."

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## *Will Herndon*



**Will Herndon** is the Executive Vice President of Construction, and co-owner at American Solar Electric, Inc located in Scottsdale, Arizona. American Solar Electric provides turnkey PV systems and roofing systems exclusively for residential customers.

“When I was in high school and college I wanted to make things better in the world and working in the renewable energy industry is one way to do that,” he said.

“My NABCEP certification provided me with knowledge I can pass on to the 15 field construction teams I am responsible for. There is nothing else out there like it. It is the clear solution to fill company field operation needs.”

“While the NABCEP application process is onerous and the exam is hard it verifies that you made the right decision in taking the exam because it solidifies what you need to know.”

“I find that any new employees, who have NABCEP certification, have the credibility of competent professionals. It separates those who are more committed to the firm. In turn, this helps me determine those who can be leaders and promoted to higher positions.”

“Within our company, field construction crews appreciate the opportunity to climb the career ladder through the

achievement of certifications. They like to see a roadmap to be successful, I like to see them develop as individuals, and that development roadmap revolves around the NABCEP certification.”

“I would like to see an expansion of the certification options offered by NABCEP. Many of our field construction professionals cannot qualify for the current PV certification because it covers way more than their job description. However, it is important to have a certification that identifies them as professionals.”

“On a personal basis, my NABCEP certification helps me to contribute to the solar industry outside of my regular job by volunteering with NABCEP committees. I am able to associate with great people on the construction end of the solar business.”

“While many customers do not understand NABCEP very well, I am hopeful that the company accreditation program will impact the marketplace by eventually replacing the local utilities company oriented certifications. If this were to happen the utilities could then make available on their websites a list of NABCEP certified companies.”

“I believe it is important to keep up my professional standards and so I will be recertifying for the NABCEP credential.”

## NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

# August Goers



**August Goers** has two NABCEP certifications — Photovoltaic Installer and Solar Thermal Installer. He is Vice President of Engineering at Luminalt Solar Energy Solutions located in San Francisco, California. Luminalt is a solar design-build firm, providing solar electric and solar hot water systems for single and multi-family homes, businesses, and non-profits.

“When I was 14 years old, I picked up some ARCO solar panels from the decommissioned Carrizo Plains power installation. I loved the idea of this panel lying in the sun and producing power day after day. The technology entranced me and I knew that I wanted a career in the solar industry. In fact, I am still using those panels for an attic fan at home.”

“The San Francisco Bay Area is a very competitive marketplace. I wanted to differentiate myself from other installers so I enhanced my engineering and electrical training with the NABCEP certifications for PV and Solar Thermal installers. I like to have the NABCEP logo on my business card. It tells customers that I know what I am doing.”

“Studying for these exams was an excellent way for me to fully understand all of the aspects of a properly designed and installed system. This is the best form of education in the renewable energy industry at this point in time.”

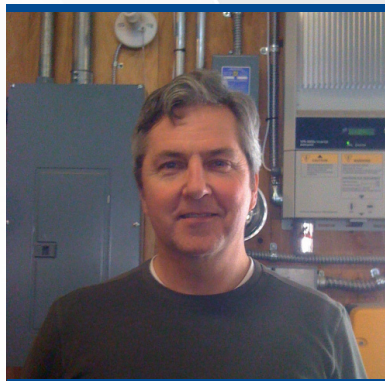
“Residential customers don’t understand NABCEP very well so, at Luminalt, we give them NABCEP informational brochures as part of educating them about the benefits of certification.”

“Commercial customers are typically more informed about NABCEP certification and they want to know if Luminalt has certificants on staff. When commercial projects are advertised, there is often a requirement for NABCEP-certified personnel and that can cause up to half of the potential bidders to drop out of the competition.”

“The value of having NABCEP certifications is so important to me that I will be recertifying for both the PV and Solar Thermal certifications when it is time to do so.”

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## Jeff Irish



**Jeff Irish**, a professional engineer and NABCEP Certified PV Installer, is the president of Hudson Valley Clean Energy, Inc. (HVCE) and Adirondack Solar located in New York State. The companies are full service providers specializing in the design, installation, and servicing of these renewable energy systems.

“I was living in Ontario, Canada during the oil shocks of 1974 and ‘79, and was so motivated by these events that I designed, with two college classmates, a zero net energy house.”

After obtaining an MBA and then a long career with G.E., he began a new career. “I researched renewable energy again, at the beginning of the new millennium, and saw that photovoltaic (PV) prices were going down and oil prices up which made for a reasonable business opportunity. Our first system went up in 2002.”

“From the beginning, the New York Solar Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) were very rigorous about demanding high quality PV installations to qualify for state incentives. They did not want a repeat of the 1980’s solar thermal debacle.”

As a P.E., Jeff is one of the few certificants to say he has had to write an even tougher exam, in electrical power, but maintains that, “The NABCEP certification exam is difficult and should remain so.”

“My NABCEP certification benefits my company because it helps to distinguish us from the competition. NYSERDA lists all of the qualified installation companies, in New York State, on its website and they highlight NABCEP certificants. So we get called before others. As well, all public bids now call for NABCEP certification.”

“While our customers want to hire a NABCEP certificant, they are confused about difference between the level of knowledge and experience there is between an individual with Entry Level training and a full certificant.”

“I am glad to see a growing number of NABCEP certificants. I’m also happy that NABCEP developed a different stamp or logo to very clearly distinguish between the Entry Level achievement and the PV Installer Certification.”

“I have already recertified twice and also volunteer on a number of NABCEP committees.”

## NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

### *Ed Murray*



**Ed Murray** is the CEO and President of Aztec Solar, Inc. located in Rancho Cordova, California. Aztec Solar is a solar energy, turn-key solution provider committed to meeting the energy needs of home and business owners by offering in-house solar water heating, solar pool heating and solar electric power.

“When I was in college I realized there was no such thing as an infinite supply of energy materials and this spurred me to find a way to make a positive difference for the planet. So, I looked for and found work in the renewable energy industry.”

“I actually fought against the concept of NABCEP certification for a long time. Then I remembered the bad history of solar thermal installations during the 1970s and 80s, and I saw that NABCEP was the key to closing an unprofessional loop for installers.”

“I was turned around when both the old and new solar guys saw NABCEP as a way to make us better professionals. People need to feel the solar industry has professional content.”

“Having written the California licensing test every five years I thought I knew everything necessary to take the NABCEP exam so I didn’t study for it at all. I was pleasantly surprised at how very comprehensive and difficult it was.”

“My NABCEP certification adds a layer of professionalism to the firm. Because solar thermal (ST) is not as wide spread as PV, the NABCEP certification raises the knowledge bar for installers. You know that they know their stuff. Aztec Solar highlights my certification in its marketing materials because it puts the firm one step above others.”

“The camaraderie among of the NABCEP certificants is very rewarding. You have mutual respect for each other and are working together to improve the solar industry, even if you are competitors.”

“I feel that my NABCEP certification tells everyone that I am the best I can be.”

# NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

## Goldah Moore



Goldah volunteering, in Tanzania, to install PV panels on a community learning center.

**Goldah Moore** has a NABCEP Solar PV Installer Certification. She works for Whidbey Sun and Wind Renewable Energy Systems in Coupeville, Washington, a system integrator that provides solar electric, solar water heating, and wind power.

“I began doing electrical work eleven years ago with my father, who is a licensed electrician. Three years ago I decided to become a journeyman electrician and got my Washington State electrical license.”

“Whidbey Sun and Wind hired my father and I about that time as their residential and commercial journeymen. The work was more interesting than conventional residential wiring and in line with my thoughts about sustainable living. This opportunity also tied in with a Solar Energy International course I had taken and I was excited to be working in the solar industry.”

“After working with Whidbey Sun and Wind for three years, a number of employees went to the Solar Power International show together. After visiting the NABCEP booth, all four of us decided to take the NABCEP Certification Exam.”

“The four of us worked as a study group for three months to prepare for the NABCEP exam. One of the biggest benefits I gained from this experience was the knowledge I gained through this study group.”

“Passing the exam has solidified my professional stature and greatly increased my confidence in my abilities to do solar installations well. It is nice to say, ‘I’m NABCEP Certified.’”

“I believe that having the NABCEP certification would be an advantage to me if I was looking for a job. I know my boss feels good about having three NABCEP Certified Solar PV Installers in his company.”

“This certification is an important asset for me so I will definitely recertify.”

“Two months after I received my NABCEP certification, I went to Chole Island, Tanzania with Solar Nexus International, and helped to install three solar systems at the Chole Learning Center. It was a wonderful experience and the knowledge that I gained while studying for the NABCEP exam was invaluable on this trip.”

## NABCEP CERTIFICANT PROFILE

### *Bruce Padgett*



**Bruce Padgett** obtained the NABCEP Certification for Solar Thermal Installer in 2008 and is the founder and president of Capitol Solar Energy LLC located in Denver, Colorado. Capitol Solar Energy designs, installs, and services solar thermal systems. He earned a BA degree from the University of Colorado in 1978 in Environmental Studies and Solar Energy Physics.

“In 1982, I was broke, unemployed, and had just moved to the Denver area. I responded to a ‘help wanted’ ad for a solar thermal company that was booming due to government incentives. One month later, they went broke. So I and one of my coworkers started our own solar thermal company. We survived with a commitment to installing systems that worked well and to excellence in workmanship and service.”

“I was asked by the Colorado Solar Energy Industries Association (CoSEIA) to become a NABCEP Certificant in order to sit on the CoSEIA committee to advise the Governor’s Energy Office on solar thermal matters.”

“I believe that my passing of the Solar Thermal Installer Certification Examination was due to the fact that it tested for the expertise that one learned through hands-on experience and knowledge gained from being in the solar industry. There were few questions about vague and obscure concepts.”

“Even though I have not advertised my NABCEP certification on my website, I have noticed that I got some telephone calls from potential customers who had seen my name on the NABCEP website.”

“I feel that the NABCEP certification has provided me with enough value that I am planning to recertify.”

“In the future, I would like to see NABCEP convince building departments that the NABCEP certification is the most relevant qualification for knowledge of solar thermal design. I wish they would use the NABCEP certification as a requirement to pull solar permits, because of its specific focus on solar technology, rather than less applicable licenses.”