



SOLAR ENERGY INNOVATOR

MEET **BRAD BURKHARTZMEYER**, FSHS CLASS OF 1978, ENTREPRENEUR AND TRAINER.

Brad Burkhartzmeyer

Co-founder of Remote Energy, Brad Burkhartzmeyer is known as a rock star for teaching technicians and engineers in other countries how to install solar systems that will be long-lasting and help them reach their water energy goals. He is remembered by students and colleagues for his wit that keeps them laughing and completely engaged. Anyone who has tried teaching technical PV (photovoltaic) design, standards, and installation practices knows that it takes a multi-talented teacher to be both an expert in the technical material and keep students awake, learning, and engaged. Brad is a master at both. His unique background has not only set him up to excel as a renewable energy trainer, it also shows his skill in teaching to an international audience.

Brad studied to be a math teacher; his first job was in Mexico teaching pre-calculus in Spanish at an all-girls school. He also acted as a Mexican program director for the Center of Global Education. His second job was in an inner-city Detroit high school teaching math and history. He then shifted to working as a community organizer for several years. After moving to Seattle, he changed fields to become an electrician with the intent of moving into the solar industry field; he has now been running Sun's Eye Solar Power in Tacoma for 14 years.

His first international solar job was in 2007, traveling to Rwanda for three weeks to manage 11 local technicians installing systems in four hospitals. From there, he installed several PV systems for the Rotary Club in Ghana and India. Brad states, "It was clear from my travels that renewable energy needed to spread really fast around the world, and the best way to increase this rate was to train more people. Teaching PV classes is a way that I can work on alleviating poverty and shift the way we get our world's energy."

Brad's favorite method of teaching is hands-on with a whiteboard so that he can review concepts that are difficult. He calls it the "toolbelt and chalkboard" approach to training.

After the 9/11 tragedy, Brad asked himself how he could make the world a better place. His answer: "Bring solar power to the developing world. It's incredible how people's lives can change because of something so small."

Burkhartzmeyer sold his electrical contracting business and moved to Guatemala where he built a micro-sized hydroelectric generator in a rural community. After the Guatemalan project, Brad returned to Tacoma and helped form a collective group of inventors to advocate for and build solar systems.

Closer to home, Burkhartzmeyer was a part of the initial phase of Brad Pitt's \$12 million project to rebuild the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans where 180 homes have been built to withstand a Category 5 hurricane. Yes, they are all solar powered!

Since 2005, Brad has worked exclusively on solar energy, focusing his efforts on countries like Costa Rica, Mexico, India, and Haiti. Brad helps communities by installing solar panels and giving them tools to do it themselves, helping create their own industry and job market. That way, they are able to move forward faster.

Brad's organization, Remote Energy, focuses on using renewable energy to address issues relating to jobs, health, clean water, education, gender equality, and poverty, often in developing or marginalized communities in more than 25 countries. Brad states, "Looking back now, those experiences teaching and meeting people in other cultures and seeing how dynamic the rest of the world is and how much energy there is, it's so exciting to be in this industry at this time."