



A Bright Idea

Students participate in an environmentally friendly fundraiser

CARRIE ZIOLKOWSKI

When schools need money for a classroom project, a sports team or a field trip, they turn to fundraising. While traditional fundraisers have students selling candy bars and pizzas, more schools are looking into raising money and educating students and communities about energy at the same time.

Schools are achieving this educational goal by putting a new twist on fundraising by selling energy-efficient light bulbs.

Students in Wisconsin are raising funds and helping the environment by selling Energy Star-qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and strings of energy-efficient light emitting diode (LED) holiday lights through a program called the Bright Idea Fundraiser.



► continued previous page

Every year, the Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP), which works to improve and increase energy education in Wisconsin, teams up with Focus on Energy to coordinate this fundraiser. Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses, including schools, to install energy-efficient and renewable energy projects.

Why is this a Bright Idea?

The Bright Idea Fundraiser has been well received because of the educational value for students as well as community members with whom they interact. In addition to raising money for schools, the program promotes awareness about the environment, energy-efficiency and health.

During the 2007-08 school year, 100 schools and other groups held a Bright Idea Fundraiser. These 100 groups sold more than 32,000 CFLs and more than 7,000 LED holiday lights. The sale of these lights generated over \$86,000 for schools, clubs and classes. These energy-efficient lights will reduce greenhouse gases by almost 38 million pounds over their lifetime, which can last 7-10 years. The bulbs sold this school year alone will generate over \$1.7 million in energy savings over the lifetime of the products.

As an extra incentive, students who sell 100 or more items are rewarded with a \$50 U.S. savings bond and a certificate of recognition from KEEP. These top sellers are also invited to the annual Energy Awards Ceremony in April. During the 2007-08 school year over 40 students received this honor.

What to Expect

When teachers sign up for the Bright Idea Fundraiser, they receive all the materials they need to conduct the fundraiser with their students. Educators receive student tally forms with information about CFLs and LEDs, an easy to follow

TOP 10 SELLING SCHOOLS FOR 2007-2008

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF CFLS SOLD	NUMBER OF LEDS SOLD	MONEY RAISED	LBS OF CO2 REDUCED
Lincoln Elementary, Madison Metropolitan School District	1,500	576	\$4,728	1,883,992
Rice Lake Middle, Rice Lake Area School District	1,711	0	\$3,422	1,923,504
Port Edwards Schools, Port Edwards School District	1,423	241	\$3,328	1,673,518
MacArthur School, Germantown School District	908	230	\$2,500	1,096,348
Maple Grove Elementary, Merrill Area School District	920	215	\$2,485	1,108,052
Madison Memorial High School, Madison Metropolitan School District	500	438	\$2,314	712,426
Washburn High School, Washburn School District	677	288	\$2,218	859,936
Badger High School Skills USA, Lake Geneva School District	886	125	\$2,147	1,038,950
Baraboo High School Physics Students, Baraboo School District	891	116	\$2,130	1,108,052
Fox River Academy, Appleton Area School District	649	234	\$2,000	809,908

group order form, classroom activities and sample CFLs and LED holiday lights.

Students participate in the fundraiser and return all orders to the school's fundraiser coordinator. The fundraiser coordinator sends the final order and payment to KEEP to be processed and the CFLs and LEDs are sent directly to the school to be distributed. The school keeps the \$2 per CFL and \$3 per LED that the students have earned.

Education Before Sales

KEEP encourages educators to teach students about the benefits of CFLs and LEDs before sending the students out into the community to sell the products.

Here are some of the facts: CFLs use up to 75 percent less energy than standard bulbs. This saves money on utility bills and reduces the amount of mercury and carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. They also last up to ten times longer,



Ten of the Bright Idea Fundraiser's top sellers were honored at KEEP's annual Energy Awards Ceremony this April in Madison

meaning fewer burnt out light bulbs. In addition, CFLs produce about 75 percent less heat than standard bulbs, making them cooler to touch and less of a fire hazard.

The LED holiday lights, which are sold during the fall semester, can also greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. LED holiday lights use up to 93 percent less energy than standard mini lights and up to 99

percent less energy than standard C7 holiday lights. They also last longer. LED lights can have a lifetime of up to 200,000 hours when used indoors. Some manufacturers also provide a five-year warranty.

If every Wisconsin household replaced just one incandescent light bulb with a CFL, more than 165 thousand tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide would be prevented

from being released into the atmosphere over the lifetime of those bulbs.

Every time someone flips a light switch to turn on a light, coal is being burned at a power plant to produce electricity, and, as it is burned, it releases carbon dioxide, mercury and other toxins. The higher the bulb wattage, the more electricity needed to make it burn, which, in turn, means higher energy costs.

Changing one light bulb is a first, but important, step toward living a healthier, more energy-efficient lifestyle.

The Bright Idea Fundraiser is a great alternative to traditional fundraising. The fundraiser will be offered September through May of the 2008-09 school year. Participation in the program is limited to 100 schools so call KEEP today to reserve a space in this popular program.

To sign up, visit uwsp.edu/keep and click on student involvement to connect to the Bright Idea Fundraiser Web site. Questions? Contact KEEP at 715-346-4651 or e-mail czioolkow@uwsp.edu.

Ziolkowski manages the Bright Idea Fundraiser and is the program coordinator for KEEP. ■

Helping Schools Turn Green

K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP) was established in 1995 and is a collaborative effort between Focus on Energy and the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education. The goal of KEEP is to improve and increase energy education in Wisconsin. KEEP accomplishes this its goal by developing and offering university credited in-service courses, teaching support materials, student involvement activities and networking opportunities. To learn more visit uwsp.edu/keep.

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses, including schools, to install cost-effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled.

Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For information about Focus on Energy, call 800-762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

The Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE), located at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was established in 1990 to promote, develop, disseminate, implement, and evaluate environmental education programs focusing on elementary and secondary school teachers and students in Wisconsin. WCEE works to improve environmental education throughout Wisconsin. Visit uwsp.edu/wcee for more information. □