

## Going Greener: *Lighten Up!* Reduces Acton's Carbon Footprint

By Sue Cudmore and Debra Simes

At last fall's Oktoberfest, the Acton Area League of Women Voters Environment Team launched a campaign to encourage Acton residents to switch from incandescent to compact fluorescent (CF) light bulbs. Dubbed *Lighten Up!*, the campaign asked residents to pledge to switch and to apprise the team of their successes in doing so.

The campaign conducted educational tabling events at many venues around town, including Acton Ace Hardware, O'Naturals restaurant, Donelan's market, the Senior Center, the Chinese Language School, the State of the Town meeting, and Acton Town Meeting. It also made information and pledge forms available on the LWV website.

The team found, during its tabling events, that although many people were already aware of the energy-saving benefits of CFs and were using some in their homes, many others had either never tried them or had tried one or two but not done a comprehensive conversion. The campaign offered education and encouragement to take the plunge for dollar, energy, and pollution savings. That pollution includes carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>, the prime contributor to global warming) and toxic emissions from power plants. The less electricity we use that's sourced from fossil fuel combustion (for customers of NStar, nearly half comes from natural gas and coal), the less CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted into the atmosphere.

If you've not yet converted to CFs, consider that they use, on average, only a quarter of the electricity of incandescents (to produce equivalent light), and that 90% of the energy used by incandescents is converted to heat rather than light! Is there some kind of award for maximum inefficiency?

The campaign has now ended, and the statistics we share focus on the possibilities for energy (and fiscal) conservation. The 142 participants in *Lighten Up!* now have 959 compact fluorescent bulbs in use in their homes. Based on local NStar electricity prices, the approximately 1.5 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per kW produced by NStar's power sources, and a "guesstimate" of 4 hours' use per day per 75-watt-equivalent CF bulb, those 959 bulbs will save 81,212 kW of electricity, 121,812 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and \$14,780 annually! Kudos to all who participated in the campaign; together, you've lightened Acton's carbon footprint, as well as the impact on your own wallets.

Also, major congratulations go out to Kenny Huang, our all-star CF converter, who installed a whopping 47 new CF bulbs in his home — in addition to the 20 he was already using! What does that mean? For Mr. Huang, it will mean annual savings of 5,674 kW, 8,510 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>, and \$1,032! Other standout savers included Greg Fleming, who changed 40 bulbs to CFs, Judy Wolff (21), Marc Humphreys (20), Toby Williams (20), Mark Judd (19 bulbs), and Gayle O'Riley (19). Thank you and congratulations go to all participants!

The LWV Environment Team encourages people to continue to replace their energy-wasting incandescents with CFs. Because they contain a small amount of toxic mercury, the only contraindication to using CFs is in locations where there is any significant risk of breakage. It's very important (again, because of the mercury) that they not be thrown away in the regular trash. Compact fluorescent bulbs can be recycled in Acton at the town's twice-yearly Hazardous Materials Collection Day (May 3) or, happily, at Acton Ace Hardware, 210 Main Street.

*Lighten Up!* had the help and support of many people and businesses, including: Mike Kreuze, for creation of our CF demonstration module; The Alternative Energy Store of Hudson; Eric Kilburn of Wellspring Sound Studio, Acton; Brad Steele and EFI; Mary McCarthy and NStar; Recycled Paper Printing Company; Acton Ace Hardware; Eva Taylor, Acton Town Clerk; O'Naturals restaurant; Donelan's Market; Roche Bros. supermarket; Acton Senior Center; Acton Chinese Language School; Dunia of Maynard; Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow; and Suzanne Shanahan of the LWV-Acton Area.

Please join the LWV Environment Team (and many other environmental and community groups) in celebrating Earth Day and the conclusion of *Lighten Up!* on May 3 at St. Matthew's church, Central Street, Acton, 10am-3pm. One lucky campaign participant will win a basket of eco-products generously donated by many of the above-named companies and local citizens. Come on down and talk with us about other ways to reduce your environmental footprint. How much money — and planet — might you be able to save?

*This article is one in an environmentally focused series generated by the Environment Team of the League of Women Voters – Acton Area. The LWV is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization committed to influencing public policy through education and advocacy. The LWV welcomes email contact and new member interest at [info@lww-aa.org](mailto:info@lww-aa.org). Contact the Environment Team at [dsimes@wordslinger.net](mailto:dsimes@wordslinger.net) (978.635.0455) or [susan.cudmore@verizon.net](mailto:susan.cudmore@verizon.net) (978.274.2021).*