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Home : Community

Project Porchlight gives away hundreds of light bulbs

Thursday, December 3, 2009

BY CHRIS NESI
MAHWAH SUBURBAN NEWS
OF SUBURBAN NEWS

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Mahwah — Simple actions matter. That's the guiding philosophy behind Project Porchlight, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower people by showing them that small changes at home can make a big difference to the health of our planet.



Karin LaGreca (left) Advisory board member of M.E.V.O.; Eric Fuchs-Stengel (center) founder of M.E.V.O.; Jill Zajac (right) Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator of Project Porchlight.

On Nov. 22, more than 60 volunteers distributed more than 1,200 high-efficiency compact fluorescent light bulbs — free of charge — to hundreds of Mahwah homes.

The bulbs use 75 percent less energy than their traditional incandescent counterparts, and last between 5 and 7 years, according to Jill Zajac, the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for the project.

Zajac oversees distributions like the one in Mahwah, and recruits volunteers to distribute the bulbs throughout towns in New Jersey.

"People are very environmentally aware these days. This is an opportunity to do something about that by distributing these bulbs," Zajac said in a Nov. 20 phone interview.

Volunteers paired up with a bag of bulbs each at the Mahwah Senior Center and hit the streets, canvassing pre-determined areas on a map provided by the organization. They go

door-to-door and hand out one free bulb per household.

Project Porchlight, which is funded by Canadian-based One Change and the Board of Public Utilities, has distributed almost 3 million light bulbs since 2004 according to their Website.

Zajac says if every household in America changed just one bulb to the compact fluorescent variety, it would be the equivalent energy savings of taking 800,000 cars off the road.

Educating consumers is part of the project's goal. Zajac suggested it was lack of information preventing more people from getting on the compact fluorescent bandwagon.

"We're there to explain to people the bulbs can be recycled and that they're perfectly safe. By going door-to-door we're able to talk to residents and educate them about the benefits, including reducing carbon dioxide and helping the environment."

Assisting in the organization were members of the Mahwah High School-based Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (M.E.V.O.)

M.E.V.O. President Eric Fuchs-Stengel was present for the distribution. he said the reaction from residents was overwhelmingly positive.

"The first thing you get is a look like you're trying to sell them something. Once you say the word 'free' they come around. We say we're doing this to help Mahwah's carbon emissions, at the very end of it most people were really happy. I didn't have a single person turn me down — everyone was pretty happy to get it. It's a free thing and a good thing, something that will help them and help the environment."

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Karin LaGrecia of the Mahwah Environmental Commission, which helped sponsor the distribution by securing the room at the senior center, said the distribution was "wonderful," and "a very nicely run, organized program."

The Environmental Commission is no stranger to the bulbs. They handed out compact fluorescent light bulbs at Mahwah Day in September, and are planning a recycling day for the bulbs down the line. LaGrecia said the changing of light bulbs is "a great thing that homeowners can do not only to reduce their energy costs, but it helps the consumption of energy and reduces carbon emissions."



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