

inside out

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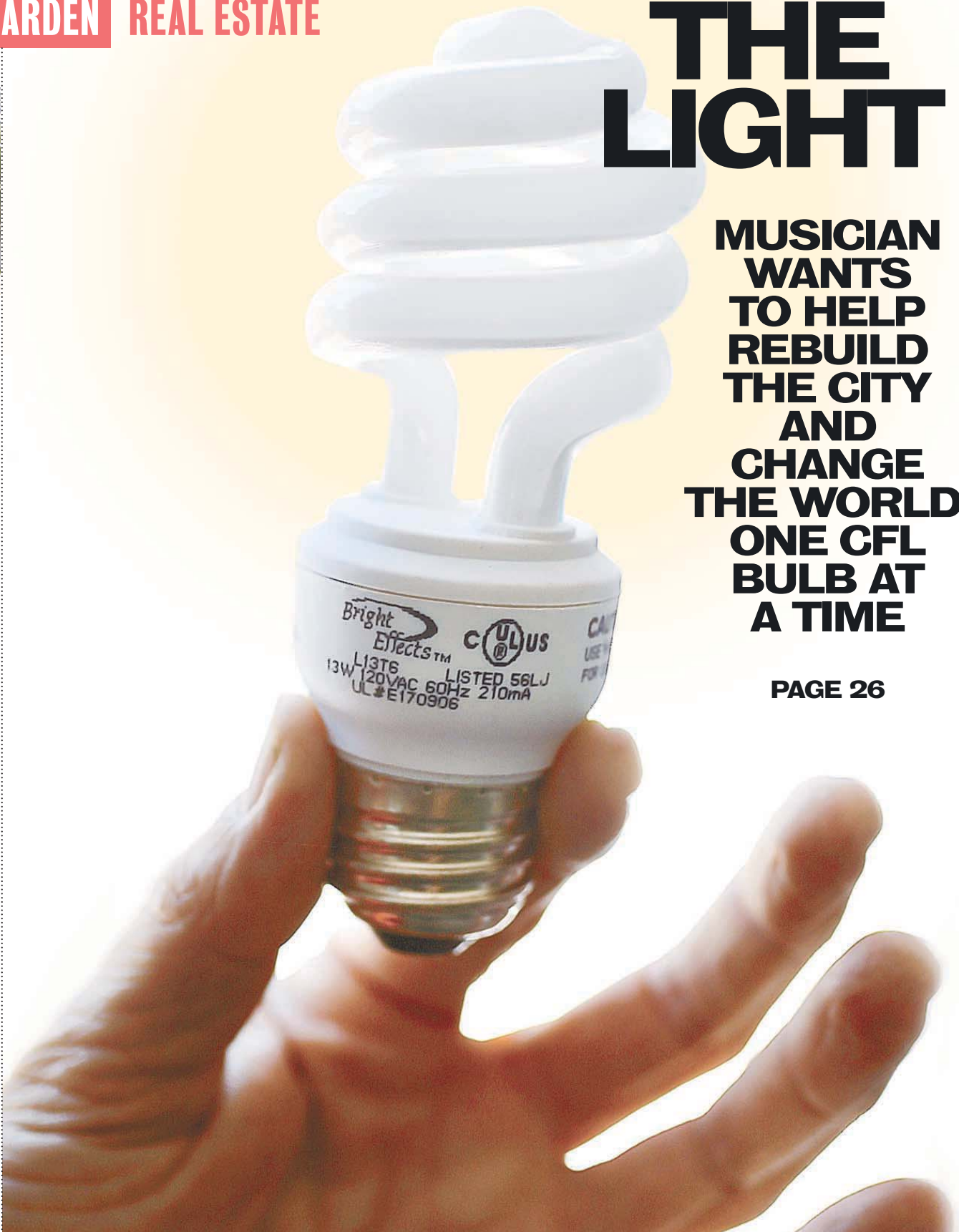
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SEEING THE LIGHT

**MUSICIAN
WANTS
TO HELP
REBUILD
THE CITY
AND
CHANGE
THE WORLD,
ONE CFL
BULB AT
A TIME**

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Bright Effects™ CULYUS
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A BRIGHT GREEN IDEA

SAVING THE EARTH AND SAVING MONEY WITH COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHTS

CFLs AND MERCURY

While compact fluorescent lights contain small amounts of mercury, none is released while the bulbs are in use, and experts agree they're safe to use in the home.

In fact, Wendy Reed, manager of the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program, which gives the bulbs its seal of approval, says that CFLs contribute less mercury to the environment than incandescent bulbs. That's because they use less electricity — and coal-fired power plants are the biggest source of mercury emissions in the air, she told National Public Radio recently.

However, care is recommended in recycling old bulbs and in handling broken ones.

According to CFL manufacturer General Electric, research has found no immediate health risk from broken bulbs. You can minimize any risk, however, by following proper cleanup guidelines:

- ▶ Sweep up — don't vacuum — all of the glass fragments and fine particles.
- ▶ Place pieces in a sealed plastic bag and wipe the area with a damp paper towel to pick up fine particles. Put the used towel in the plastic bag as well.
- ▶ If weather permits, open windows to ventilate the room.

Like paint, batteries and other hazardous household items, old CFLs should be disposed of properly. Do not throw away CFLs in household garbage if better disposal options exist. A check at www.earth911.org found only one site in Louisiana where the bulbs can be recycled. Lamp Environmental Industries (www.lei-inc.net) accepts household CFLs at its facility in Independence (Tangipahoa Parish.) "You come in and fill out a slip and we accept it for free," a spokesperson said, noting that there is a charge for business waste.

CFLs contain an average of 5 milligrams of mercury. By comparison, older thermometers contain 500 milligrams, and many manual thermostats contain up to 3,000 milligrams.

The EPA says that airborne mercury poses a very low risk of exposure. However, when mercury emissions deposit into lakes and oceans, they can transform into methyl mercury, which builds up in fish. Fish consumption is the most common pathway for human exposure to mercury.

GREEN LIGHT NEW ORLEANS

WHAT: A free program that exchanges in-home incandescent light bulbs for energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs.

WHO: Any New Orleans resident can request the service.

WHERE: Volunteers come into homes to change the bulbs.

HOW: To sign up for the service, to volunteer, or to make a donation, go to www.greenlightneworleans.com; write P.O. Box 13564, New Orleans, LA 70185; or phone (504) 324-2429.

SAVINGS TO DATE

Green Light New Orleans gives these five-year projections on the effect of the 3,724 Compact Fluorescent Lights its volunteers have installed:

ENERGY SAVED: 1,467,256 KWH

ESTIMATED VALUE: \$171,304

CARBON EMISSIONS CUT: 800,660 pounds.

Green Light aims to change out 20,000 bulbs by year's end.

Major CLF donors include Wal-Mart, Lowe's, TCP, Sylvania and Entergy.



Andi Hoffmann had the bright idea behind Green Light New Orleans. He spends about 40 hours a week on the program, doing everything from soliciting Compact Fluorescent Light donations, responding to people who request the bulbs and coordinating volunteers and installation dates.

STAFF PHOTOS BY CHRIS GRANGER



At a recent Holy Cross neighborhood event, a volunteer team of Tey Stileler, left, Carl Baloney and Miro Hoffmann does bulb duty. About 15 volunteers replaced 387 incandescent lights.

By Karen Taylor Gist
InsideOut associate editor

How many light bulbs does it take to change the world? Andi Hoffmann and his Green Light New Orleans project have screwed in 3,724 of them, and he believes he's already making a difference.

His plan to save energy, and thereby reduce the pollution that results from its creation, is stunningly simple.

Here's how it works: Green Light sends volunteers into homes across New Orleans to replace standard incandescent bulbs with donated Compact Fluorescent Lights, the curlicue bulbs that require only a fraction of the energy yet provide the same amount of illumination. Homeowners get the bulbs and installation free: All they have to do is sign up for an appointment and have a ladder handy, if necessary, when the volunteers arrive.

Once the bulbs have been changed, homeowners get a report projecting the energy savings from using the CFLs over their estimated lifespan of five years.

Then the report hits homeowners right in the pocketbook, translating that energy savings into dollars and cents saved on electric bills. Less energy use also equals less pollution. The good news for Mother Nature is on the report as well, in the form of projected reductions in carbon emissions.

There it is: An all gain, no pain environmental effort.

That is, if you don't count Green Light's growing pains.

As the project has expanded, Hoffmann, a musician and Web site designer, says he's putting in 40-plus hours a week seeking donations, working with other organizations that help supply volunteers, making calls to people who sign up for the program — about eight a day — managing logistics and changing bulbs.

He's begun seeking grants and corporate support to, among other things, pay salaries for himself and a staff person. "We're accepting about 350 bulbs a week," he says, "but we can do a lot more."

"We can change the whole city. People are open for it. Everywhere I go they are with open arms and they thank you for the help."

The green light

After Katrina, "I knew I wanted to do something," Hoffmann said. "I didn't want to gut houses. I wanted to connect with the reason we had Katrina. What I'm doing had to be environmental, connected to global warming."

(Many scientists believe that sea-temperature changes caused by global warming will lead — or already are leading — to increased hurricane intensity.)

Hoffmann had switched to using CFL bulbs in his own home, and had seen a noticeable drop in his energy bill over the first couple of months. "My first thought was wondering, 'Why did it take me so long?' A, it was the money, and B, it was something we're not used to."

SHEDDING SOME LIGHT

▶ The Environmental Protection Agency says Compact Fluorescent Lights use two-thirds less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

▶ CFLs work differently from incandescent or halogen bulbs, which create light by heating a filament inside; the heat makes the filament white-hot, producing light. About 90 percent of the energy those bulbs emit is heat. Fluorescent bulbs, on the other hand, contain a gas that, when excited by electricity, hits a coating inside the bulb and emits light. Fluorescent bulbs emit only about 30 percent of their energy as heat.

▶ Because CFLs are more efficient in producing light, a 15-watt compact fluorescent bulb makes the same amount of light as a 60-watt incandescent bulb. Most CFL packages include wattage equivalents.

▶ Incandescent wattage - Equivalent CFL wattage
40 - 10
60 - 15
75 - 20
100 - 26-29

*Source: GE

▶ Special, and more expensive, CFL bulbs can be used with dimmers and three-way lamps. Check packages carefully to make sure you get the right ones.

▶ Older CFLs flickered when turned on because it took a few seconds to produce enough electricity to excite the gas inside them, but in newer bulbs the process takes less than a second. However, CFLs do require a brief warm-up period before they reach full brightness.



Green Light volunteer Tey Stileler holds an incandescent bulb removed in favor of a new curlicue CFL.

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That's when the good-idea light bulb switched on in his head: He'd found a way he could make a difference. He would encourage others to switch to CFLs.

With his band, Andi Hoffmann and B-Goes, heading off on a European tour, "I decided I wanted to offset the tour pollution. Five people going overseas in a plane create a certain amount of pollution. Driving in a van creates pollution. You can actually calculate how much. I had to do something to offset it."

Europeans tend to be environmentally conscious, says Hoffmann, who came to New Orleans about 20 years ago from Switzerland. So he invited his audiences to contribute to the cause.

Collections totaled about \$2,000, which became the project's seed money. Hoffmann used it to buy his first bulbs. "Then I had to find homes to put them in," he said.

And that's how Green Light New Orleans was born.

Spotlighting the environment

On a recent afternoon, Hoffmann and another volunteer changed out bulbs in three homes.

One belonged to the Rev. Calvin Franklin, who also passed out information on Green Light to members of his Rising Star Missionary Baptist Church. Wife Dawn Franklin had heard about the program from several neighbors who'd gotten CFLs through Green Light. Until now, this kind of word-of-mouth has been Hoffmann's main method of spreading his message.

Fifty-one bulbs were changed at the home, and another six were left for the highest fixtures, which Franklin would change himself.

"You know, I like plenty of light. We have bulbs in every lamp and we use them," said Dawn Franklin.

One of the fixtures was outside. "The outside lights are on the most," Hoffmann said, "so it makes sense that if you burn 13 watts instead of 60 or 70 watts you save a lot."

Dawn Franklin noted that she has been reluctant to buy CFLs herself. "Now I get to try them out for free. If they last like they say, I will be using them. They're not that expensive if they really last," she said. (A six-pack of 60-watt-equivalent CFLs is \$15.16 at www.walmart.com.)

Hoffmann is adamant about sending volunteers into homes to change bulbs rather than just giving the CFLs away. "They won't get used that way," he said. "They might just sit on a shelf, or be sold."



Hoffmann, right, tells Holy Cross resident Dianne Freeman about the energy-efficient CFL bulbs.

As part of the process, he's also careful to inform homeowners that the CFLs contain small amounts of mercury and should be handled carefully; he's working on finding a local recycling venue for burned-out bulbs.

"By the time they burn out in five years, we'll be used to that (recycling)," he said.

Another home that Hoffmann recently visited belonged to Kim and Renee Scott, whose Gentilly house was a Katrina casualty. The Scotts now rent half a Mid-City shotgun double. "It's hard to start over with everything," said Kim Scott. "Rents are high. This apartment is nice, but the house we lost was better."

She heard about Green Light while attending an energy-saving program at Entergy. Another attendee referred her.

Her electric bill, she said, was about \$270 a month in early spring — before she began running her room AC units.

At the Scotts' house, Hoffmann climbed a ladder while his partner cut open packages of CFLs. They can't be used in recessed lights that are covered, he explained, or in lights with dimmers. (CFLs are available for use with dimmers or three-way switches, but to keep costs down, Hoffmann uses only standard-type bulbs.)

The fan-light combination in the Scotts' den took three bulbs, and the change went smoothly. In the bedroom, there was a momentary snag. "May need pliers," he said from the ladder. "The other light bulb was bad with the socket." But with a little TLC, the old bulb came out.

"This light is better for me," said Renee Scott, who was familiar with CFLs because his pre-Katrina employer, a hotel, also had used them.

Kim Scott was satisfied, too. A few weeks later, she reported, "They don't put out as much heat. The house doesn't seem as hot."

After 13 incandescents were replaced with CFLs, it was time for the final report. Hoffmann figured that over five years, the family will reduce potential carbon emissions by about 2,300 pounds, use 5,120 fewer kilowatt hours of electricity and save \$398.

Clearly pleased, Renee Scott pulled out his wallet, offering to pay something for the service. Hoffmann refused it. He doesn't carry cash on installations, and he won't accept any.

"This really should be a free service," he said. "We've got to keep it going."

"The philosophy is that we don't want to exclude anybody, but I steer to low income. When people can afford it, they can donate if they want," on the Web site or by sending checks.

For that day's three installations, which totaled 94 bulbs, Hoffmann figured a five-year savings of 37,036 kilowatt hours of energy, translating to \$4,324 saved on electric bills and 20,210 fewer pounds of carbon emissions.

"It took three hours. It's easy and everybody's happy. It's such a no-brainer," he said.

The volunteer ladder

Hoffmann credits The Alliance for Affordable Energy

TEN SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SAVE ENERGY

If you want to do more than change your light bulbs to save the planet, you have plenty of options. Here are 10 quick and easy energy-saving tips.

1. Lose the junk from your trunk; each 100 lbs. in the car increases gas consumption 1 percent to 2 percent.
2. Turn off the pilot to your gas fireplace. Forty to 50 percent of the power the fireplace uses is from the pilot light.
3. Use solar-powered garden or walkway lights.
4. Brew sun tea instead of using the stove.
5. Turn off lights when leaving the room. Ditto TVs.
6. Insulate the hot water heater.
7. Do full loads of laundry, rather than a lot of small ones.
8. Clean your refrigerator coils twice a year. It helps make the appliance more efficient and avoids a potential fire hazard.
9. Put bank accounts and credit card statements online to stop the unnecessary flow of paper. Get your name removed from preapproved credit card and insurance offers. Go to: OptOutPrescreen.com, or call (888) 567-8688.
10. Buy recycled products for paper towels, printer paper, etc.

SOURCES: Robin Wilson Home; the Alliance for Affordable Energy and organizational expert Jill Pollack

with helping him get started. Among other things, the organization provided volunteers for his first "installation event." His partnership with the alliance continues; it matches volunteers, CFL donations and neighborhoods in need to Green Light.

"We have the same goal of carbon reduction," Hoffmann said.

The local chapter of the Hands On Network also has become a partner. Nonprofit Project Coordinator Briana O'Brien heard about Green Light and asked Hoffmann to put CFLs in the James Singleton Charter School. Now, she sends him volunteers.

"All of the volunteers who end up doing this project love it," she said at a recent installation event in the Holy Cross neighborhood.

One reason may be its simplicity. "People are so frustrated now, with the Road Home and insurance claims. So it's wonderful to give something simple," said Kathy Muse, of the Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, which hosted the neighborhood event. "People like this. It's free. It's Earth changing. You simply sign up and you get it. There's no bureaucracy."

Forest Bradley-Wright, sustainable rebuild coordinator for the Alliance for Affordable Energy and a Green Light volunteer, enjoys the people-to-people aspect of the program. "I like Andi's approach. It uses word of mouth, family, friends and neighbors."

He also sees it as sowing seeds of change. "You sit down at the end and talk about utility bills," he said. "You've changed the bulbs. You've changed awareness. You teach that little things make a difference. It puts control back in their hands."

"It helps people feel empow-

ered to help the environment. It plants the seed, 'Hey, I'm someone who works for the environment.'

"The most important thing you can do for the environment is waste less energy."

All in a day's work

At the Holy Cross event, 387 incandescent bulbs were replaced with CFLs, keeping an estimated 83,205 pounds of carbon from the atmosphere and saving 152,478 kilowatt hours of electricity, which translates into \$17,802 over five years for the participating residents.

The 15 volunteers were a cultural cross-section. Karen Suit of Metairie heard about the effort at Jazzfest, where she volunteers with Muse. "It sounded really interesting, and I'm all about the green thing," she said. "I can't wait to see what happens."

"They have fun," Hoffmann said. "You have to make it enjoyable. I can preach about light bulbs all day," but that won't make a difference.

When volunteers actually experience going into an appreciative client's home, "everyone comes back happy."

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Hoffmann's calculations for energy savings are based on an average from different sources:

- Energy cost per KWH (March 2006, Entergy New Orleans) \$0.118- One 15w CFL light bulb used 24 hours a day for one year (8,760 hours) saves \$46 (394.2 KWH) compared with an incandescent bulb. (source: Entergy New Orleans lighting calculator).
- The atmospheric carbon reduction (using Eastern coal) for 394 KWH is about 215 lbs. (Source: carbon calculator www.chuckwright.com.)
- Most 15-watt light bulbs last 10,000 hours (savings: \$53 + 450 KWH = 245 pounds of carbon)