

J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON**Program helps customers buy compact fluorescents**

Last year, the city of Columbia's "Lighten-Up" program offered a \$7.50 rebate to residential and commercial electric customers who purchased a compact fluorescent light bulb. The rebate program was quite successful — more than 1,000 people participated, and it has been renewed for this year.

Compact fluorescent bulbs fit into a standard light fixture and emit the same amount of light as a standard bulb, but use only a fourth as much energy. Even more important, compact fluorescents last 13 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Over the life of a CF bulb, you can save \$30 to \$40 in energy costs and prevent the burning of a quarter ton of coal.

The only drawback to CF bulbs is a high initial cost — bulbs cost between \$12 and \$20. The city's rebate program is designed to help defer that initial cost. To receive a rebate from the city, send the store receipt, a water and light rebate coupon and the UPC code from the CF bulb package to the city Water and Light Department.

CF bulbs come in many different shapes and sizes. The city is offering a free "fit kit" to help you determine which bulb is right for your fixture. "We put together a kit that graphically lays out the size of each bulb, so that people can take a look at all the sizes and shapes that are available and try them out in their fixture be-

fore they purchase the actual bulb," said Jay Hasheider, Columbia energy management specialist. Hasheider said the kit also includes information about where the different models of CF bulbs can be purchased.

The number of stores offering CFs has increased, Hasheider said. "Last year, we had about 16 to 18 vendors of compact fluorescents in Columbia. I think this year there are 22 or 23 vendors that we know of."

The Columbia Center for Sustainable Living is working with the Water and Light Department on a project to distribute CF bulbs to low-income households. "We wanted to augment the city's program by reaching people who couldn't lay out the money for a compact fluorescent," said Elizabeth Jones, director of the Center for Sustainable Living.

The project works as follows: The Center for Sustainable Living purchases bulbs wholesale at a cost of \$9 and sells the bulbs to eligible participants for \$1.50. Participants in the program then sign their \$7.50 rebate over to the center. The center breaks even because the program is staffed by volunteers, and ~~because~~ participants get CF bulbs for only \$1.50! Last weekend, the center distributed about 17 CF bulbs at an Energy Savings Open House held at St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal church.

"This is an on-going project," Jones said. "We had our kickoff on

Sunday with the open house, and next Sunday we are going to canvass door to door in public housing." Jones said that the center plans to continue the project into the spring. "We want to get as many compact fluorescents out as possible — 300, 400 of them — we have a long way to go. And I want to do it next year, if the city does the rebate program again."

If you would like a CF "fit kit" or information about the city's rebate program, write to: Water and Light Department, PO Box N, Columbia, Mo., 65205. For information about the Center for Sustainable Living's light bulb distribution project, call Elizabeth Jones at 875-0539.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.