

Glendale going greener on lighting

by Rebekah L. Sanders - Mar. 17, 2010 09:57 AM
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Glendale has long emphasized water conservation. Now city officials are putting higher priority on saving electricity, too.

As part of the push, departments are installing energy-efficient light bulbs from parks to traffic signals with the help of federal stimulus money.

Glendale is hiring a part-time educator to run a new Energy Matters program that promotes cutting energy use to schoolchildren, homeowners and businesses. The three-year position would also be paid for with stimulus funds.

And if you've ever wondered how much a solar water heater costs, how much juice your cell phone charger eats up or what you can do with \$200 to lower your electricity bill, the city's upcoming Green Festival will have the answers.

"As 'green' becomes more popular, we've been looking to let the public know what's available," Jo Miller, Glendale water conservation manager, said.

The March 27 festival, as well as workshops to be planned by the new part-time educator, also will have information about rebates from Salt River Project, Arizona Public Service and the government for certain energy-efficiency improvements.

In the spirit of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, a byproduct of electricity generation, the annual Family Bike Ride

scheduled for the same day as the festival will get families out of their cars and onto eco-friendly, emissions-free bicycles.

The city's own electricity-cutting strategies are feasible because of \$2.34 million recently awarded to Glendale through the federal recovery act's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.

LED and other types of light bulbs, which save money by burning less power and lasting longer, are being installed in traffic signals, park ball fields, Glendale Main Library, the police/city court building and a water treatment plant.

The upgrade in some places is long overdue. The library's lighting system is so old that replacement bulbs are no longer available, Miller said.

Meanwhile, a city groundwater well pump that uses electricity whether it's active or not will be exchanged for one that consumes energy only when pumping.

The electricity used by the old pump when not turned on is known as "phantom energy," Miller said.

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In homes, phantom energy is used by televisions, cell phone chargers, computers and other appliances that are plugged in, even when not turned on.

The city's new educator will hand out free meters, like the Kill A Watt, to detect phantom energy used by home appliances and estimate the owner's daily, monthly and yearly costs.

Other devices will be given out to help residents save electricity, such as programmable thermostats and compact fluorescent light bulbs, Miller said.

Glendale projects it will spend \$449,000 less on electrical and repair bills each year due to the energy-efficiency stimulus improvements. The savings have already been factored in to the upcoming fiscal year's budget, city spokeswoman Kim Larson said.

More sustainable solutions are likely around the corner.

The City Council recently began a green task force. Glendale University, the city education series for residents, will likely add a sustainability unit. And Glendale has joined the Sustainable Cities Network, a growing partnership between local governments and Arizona State University's Global Institute of Sustainability that shares ideas on helping the environment.

"We're working really hard on outreach," Larson said.

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