

Little Falls Community High School

Through MP-sponsored Learn & Earn, “Everyone saves and everyone wins.”

Through Learn & Earn, a company-sponsored energy conservation education program, the hard work of students at Little Falls Community Middle School is paying off. Not only have they educated their parents, fellow students and community about the benefits of energy conservation – they’ve earned money to support their school’s science curriculum activities and buy new lab equipment.



From left: teachers Susan Sperstad and Jeff Opelia, Dave Gruenes of Stearns Electric, Curt Tryggestad, Little Falls superintendent of schools, Mary Bindewald, Brad Hubred, teacher Dave Gregoire, Nate Swenson, middle school principal, and teacher Bob Stark.

“This is the second Learn & Earn project MP has sponsored at Little Falls Community School,” said MP Regional Account Manager Mary Bindewald, a Learn & Earn coordinator. “Schools and faculty really find this program valuable, because as a fund-raiser, it’s easy for them to administer. And the educational component is equally valuable.”

Learn & Earn challenges students to learn about and promote the economic and environmental benefits of energy-efficient compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs. The program includes a special sale on qualified CFLs at participating community retailers.

Promotional articles and ads were placed in local media and rebate coupons were distributed within the community by students. Coupons were also available through participating retailers. The sponsoring utilities donated \$1 to the school for each bulb sold during the special two-month CFL promotion and sale.

The students and their science teacher, Dave Gregoire, teamed up with Minnesota Power and these other Learn & Earn co-sponsors: Stearns Electric Association, Crow Wing Power, Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative and the City of Randall Municipal Utility. Participating retailers crucial to the event’s success are Hardware Hank and Rental, Little Falls Fleet Supply and True Value Hardware, Ace Hardware and Coborn’s Grocery Store.

“Participation from our local retailers was excellent,” Bindewald said. “And they basically sold out of all the CFL products that were offered in this Learn & Earn. We greatly



appreciate their initiative in promoting energy efficiency education and supporting their local schools.”

Through the program’s classroom component, students also participated in hands-on experiments using watt meters to measure the energy performance of various lighting products. And they conducted research and developed strategies to share their energy knowledge with fellow students, family members and the community.

The event will result in annual energy savings of \$16,000, saving enough electricity to power 20 homes for a year and decreasing carbon—the equivalent of taking 49 cars off the road for a year.

At a recent celebration at Little Falls Community Middle School, Bindewald presented students with a certificate of appreciation. Students also beamed about the \$3,500 check presented to the school by MP and its utility co-sponsors.

“One of the most important benefits is that Learn & Earn ties students, teachers, parents and the community together on ideas to conserve our resources,” teacher Dave Gregoire told Powergram. “It encourages all of us to take ownership in our resource use and emphasizes how important it is to conserve. We were pleased with how it went. And this event is different from other types of fund-raisers that people get inundated with. When the whole community buys into it, everyone saves and everyone wins.”
