

Washington Elementary School, Cloquet

Students at Washington Elementary School in Cloquet, Minn., raised awareness of Earth Week 2005 by teaching others in their community and school how to save energy at home. At the same time, they raised money to further their own environmental education at the Laurentian Environmental Learning Center in the Superior National Forest.



Students worked the Minnesota Power booth at the Cloquet Home and Business Expo, distributing CFL information and rebate coupons.

Minnesota Power approached school officials earlier this year, asking if students would be interested in helping to promote the use of energy-efficient compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs. In exchange, Minnesota Power would award the school one dollar for every CFL bulb sold during a special promotion at a local retailer.

Washington Elementary accepted the challenge.



Working with Minnesota Power, fifth graders at Cloquet's Washington School earned \$4,300 for an environmental field trip and other school activities

Fifth grade teachers followed lesson plans with hands-on activities to demonstrate the benefits of CFL bulbs. For example, students used an electricity meter to confirm that CFLs require 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

Armed with their new knowledge, fifth graders developed skits and mini "lessons" to educate younger students in the school about CFLs. They brought home rebate coupons worth \$2 off the price of a CFL purchase to encourage their parents to make the switch, as well as five minute shower timers to remind themselves to conserve water and energy. The students also helped Minnesota Power distribute CFL information and coupons at the Cloquet Home and Business Expo in early April.

"It was fun, and people were really interested to learn how much energy and money they could save with these bulbs," said Kayla Whipple, a fifth grader who participated in the campaign.

The coupons were redeemable during Earth Week at L&M Supply in Cloquet. CFL bulbs usually sell for \$4 to \$7 apiece but were available for less than a dollar with Minnesota Power's instant rebate and the store discount. Through this effort, area residents replaced more than four thousand incandescent bulbs with CFLs. The promotion netted the school approximately \$4,300 in Minnesota Power Conservation

Improvement Program (CIP) funding for the fifth grade field trip and other district-wide activities.



Fifth graders (left to right) Cade Kutter, Emily Keller and Kayla Whipple compare a CFL bulb to a standard incandescent bulb using an electricity meter.

“As school budgets tighten, we always are looking for creative ways to partner with business and industry to keep educational opportunities available,” said Principal Randy Thudin. “We are grateful to Minnesota Power for its financial contribution.”

“It is so hard to get money for the school, and it was nice to do a fundraiser where kids actually learned something valuable,” said Heather Johnson, one of the school’s fifth grade teachers. “They’ll remember it, too, because it was fun.” Fellow teacher Kyle Young agreed: “The students loved it. It was a very worthwhile effort.”

“Getting young people excited about energy conservation is very important,” said Craig Kedrowski, regional account manager at Minnesota Power. “This project helped students communicate their enthusiasm about conservation to others allowed Minnesota Power to direct CIP dollars toward environmental education. We plan to use project as a model to assist additional schools.”