

Published March 28th, 2012

'Going Dark' Sheds Light on Climate Change

By Sophie Braccini



Photo courtesy Sustainable Lafayette

Lafayette will lead the way to sustainability from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. March 31 with its second annual celebration of Earth Hour. Created in 2007, participants turn off all non-essential electric lights for one hour to raise awareness of (and to take action against) climate change. This is the second year non-profit organization Sustainable Lafayette has led the project locally.

"Earth Hour was created by Australia's branch of the World Wildlife Federation," said Sustainable Lafayette Board Member Linda Reibel. "In 2011, the movement grew to 135 countries. Last March, over 5,200 cities and towns (including Lafayette) turned off lights for Earth Hour or held some other creative event to honor our planet."

Residents of Lamorinda and beyond are invited to meet at the Lafayette Plaza by 8:30 p.m. (southeast corner of Moraga Rd. and Mt. Diablo Blvd.) on March 31 before Lafayette City Council Member Brandt Andersson turns off all the plaza lights and addresses the crowd.

While working at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Andersson researched using daylight instead of electric lighting, and matching lighting needs to the tasks being

performed.

"I learned two things," said the council member. "First, my boss, who was usually the last one to leave on Friday night, made a habit of going around the building before he left turning out lights that were not being used. In the 30 minutes that he spent each week switching lights off, he figured he more than paid for his substantial senior UC professor's salary. Second, we monitored some church meeting rooms in Missouri a few years ago. The rooms were well lit by skylights during the day, but we also found that as night fell, the lights stayed off (even though meetings continued) until the lighting levels were a small fraction of the lighting typically needed for a meeting. The folks in those meetings explained that as the sun went down and the light lowered, it got pretty darn dark before anyone felt the need to get up and switch on the lights. The bottom line is that if you turn off unused lights, and don't use more light than you really need, you'll save money, and a little bit of the earth as well. Earth Hour helps send that message."

Residents are encouraged to bring candles and, like last year, the fire dancers will be performing.

"This year we want to emphasize ways to save electricity," said Reibel.

To that end, Reibel designed a pledge card that proposes different actions people can take to conserve, including: buy or borrow a Kill-a-Watt gadget and plug it into various electric devices to see how much electricity is used; try out a solar oven; replace a conventional light bulb (or ten) with a CFL or LED; use less air conditioning in the summer; air dry clothes; hibernate computers at night; and (finally) seriously investigate solar power for your home or business.

For more information about Earth Hour and ways to save electricity, go to sustainablelafayette.org.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA