

ACE Hardware now an ace on sustainability

BY CLIFF NEWELL ✉

The Lake Oswego Review, Nov 29, 2007

ACE Hardware of Lake Oswego is going way beyond nuts and bolts when it comes to sustainability.

It was never more apparent than during the recent Green Week, a national celebration to promote sustainability in the USA.

The shelves at Ace were full of products all intended for sustainable living – Mrs. Meyer’s line, eco friendly trash bags, “little squiggly” light bulbs from Energy Star that are energy efficient and help the environment.

Not only that, but Ace provides bins and boxes for which customers can leave compact fluorescent lights and batteries to be recycled.

“We’re doing our part to keep Lake Oswego green,” said Gary Chek, community relations director for Ace Hardware.

To explain why ACE has taken this trend, Chek has some amazing statistics right at his fingertips:

“If every American home replaced just one light bulb or fixture with an Energy Star product, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes, save more than \$600 million in energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gasses equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.”

Want to save on your energy bill? Then buy some of those little squiggly light bulbs. Chek said that stats from Energy Star show that by using these light bulbs a family can save 30 percent off of its energy bill in a year, roughly \$600 when you consider the average yearly utility bill for a home is \$1,900.

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Gary Chek, community relations director for ACE Hardware in Lake Oswego, says the local store is teaming with Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation in an exclusive program in which batteries for cell phones can be disposed of properly.

Those are great reasons, indeed. But ACE Hardware had an even better reason for getting on board the sustainability bandwagon –customers. Chek couldn’t help but notice that many ACE customers were driving a Prius (a hybrid, fuel-efficient vehicle), and more, too.

“When customers would check out, we would offer them a plastic bag,” Chek said. “But they would say, ‘That’s all right, I have my own bag.’ It’s usually biodegradable.

“People are coming in asking for products that suit their lifestyle. I’ve seen more Lake Oswego people get involved because they really want to make a difference. These products are selling really well.”

As one ACE customer put it, “I’m not into tree hugging. I’m into buying things that work.”

These products include:

■ Energy Star light bulbs. They aren't just squiggly. They come in all shapes, colors and sizes for indoor or outdoor use. The Energy Star designation means these bulbs are meeting energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Energy. Chek noted, "It's sort of like the old Good Housekeeping seal."

■ Bag To Nature yard and kitchen bags, made by a Canadian company. As a pun it's not the greatest, but as a bag it's terrific.

"They're a tremendous environmental breakthrough," Chek said. "They made from corn and a blend of biopolymers. They don't leak, and they biodegrade with no residue. They're perfect for backyard composters."

As James Brown would say, "Papa's got a brand new bag."

■ Mrs. Meyer's cleaning products for laundry, house and pets. All are green and recycling oriented and free of chemicals, and safe to use with pets, kids and expectant mothers. Plus they offer something different: Aromatherapy for the home. You can buy a whole line of products in one pleasing scent – lavender, baby blossom, geranium, lemon.

"Mrs. Meyer's products are flying off the shelves," said Chek, who discovered the line just a couple months ago at a trade show. "They're phenomenal. They're a new way to clean and a safe way to clean."

■ Fresh Wave. This product offers a natural solution to household and pet odors, and it is available in spray or gel. Yes, Fresh Wave can make your dog sustainable. It is made for the green home.

Certainly, Chek is happy that ACE Hardware has discovered some new products that are selling well. But now the company is forging ahead to the cutting edge on sustainability with new programs.

"ACE has taken a pro-active approach," Chek said. "We've teamed up with Energy Star on the Save a Light Program. When one bulb goes out, we're encouraging customers to replace with an Energy Star bulb."

Which will then save the aforementioned big bucks.

Then there is the Eco Lights Program, which is exclusive to ACE Hardware in Lake Oswego. It provides for the recycling of compact fluorescent lights.

"The downside of these lights is that they have a small amount of mercury in them," Chek said. "Sometimes people smash them just to see the sparkling dust, but mercury is unsafe. With Eco Lights, these bulbs can legally and safely recycled for 75 cents per bulb (a fee that covers transportation and disposal of the bulb)."

The program is off to a good start. In its first week there were 100 bulbs recycled, according to Chek.

Then there is the teaming with RBRC (Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation). This is another Lake Oswego ACE Hardware exclusive program in which batteries for cell phones can be disposed of properly.

There is no end in sight for the sustainability trend at ACE Hardware.

"It started about the time the Al Gore movie ("An Inconvenient Truth") came out and all those movies and documentaries out there," Chek said.

The pace toward sustainability has quickened recently. ACE brought in Mrs. Meyer's products just two months ago and Bag To Nature bags a month ago.

Chek suggests several Web sites devoted to sustainable products sold at ACE Hardware in Lake Oswego.

- www.totalreclaim.com .

- www.rbrc.org (*batterie*).

- www.bagtonature.com .

For more information about sustainability products and projects at ACE Hardware in Lake Oswego, call Gary Chek at 971-275-2238. ACE Hardware is located at 55 S. State St. in the Lakewood Shopping Center in Lake Oswego.