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Bust-a-Bulb, The Sequel

Once Again, the Most Fun You Can Have with a Light Bulb On

The March 8th ice storm had a chilling effect on the Essex Energy Task Force's outdoor Bust-a-Bulb effort. As a result, an indoor reprise is on the way. The Bust-a-Bulb team will appear at TeenFest Vermont at the CVE fairgrounds in Essex Junction from Noon to 8 pm on Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1.

Bust-a-Bulb is the brainchild of Task Force members who wished to encourage friends to trash incandescent bulbs sooner, rather than later, by making it fun to retire working bulbs. Youth who shattered lit bulbs at the March event came away smiling. One of them returned later in the day with more of his parents' bulbs. But extreme weather conditions kept others off icy roads and away from the event held in Essex Center.

As the icicle-covered crew broke down their setup that day, they vowed to try again, in warmer weather or indoors, to reach more teenagers – and adults – with their message that buying a compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb and leaving it on the shelf saves neither energy nor money. By swapping out incandescent bulbs before they burn out, one can reap the benefits of a CFL purchase sooner.

Certainly the frugal New Englander in each of us recoils at the thought of wasting a 'perfectly good' incandescent bulb. In fact, sponsors of the first Bust-a-Bulb got a handful of phone calls from citizens expressing similar sentiments. Another citizen worried that the wrong type of bulb might be smashed accidentally. Others wondered if the shock-and-awe value of such an event was worth wasting bulbs for ... Was there no one who could afford to use up the energy-hungry incandescents?

The Energy Task Force carefully weighed such concerns before scheduling "The Sequel," in light of the broad media coverage received and the praise garnered from citizens who applauded the ingenuity with which the group targeted the often hard-to-reach teenage demographic. As one long-time energy consultant and father of a teen put it, "I love the idea. I will be telling my out-of-state clients about it. And I will always be jealous I did not think of this first!"

Incidentally, the Bust-a-Bulb team has taken measures to make "The Sequel" more sustainable by using compressed air instead of CO₂ and tiny reusable rubber balls instead of paint-filled ones.

The Energy Task Force is indebted to two local businesses that have benefited from CFL use – Bibens ACE Hardware and John Leo & Sons – for helping sponsor their booth at TeenFest Vermont, and to Eric Engler of EnglerPaintballGuns.com in Jeffersonville for lending his time, equipment and expertise to both Bust-a-Bulb events.

Donations of swapped-out, working incandescent bulbs are still being accepted via a collection barrel outside the town offices at 81 Main Street, Essex Junction.