



# Energizing Education

Fifth-grade sleuths search for energy-saving clues with the help of the Energy Detective program.

OPPD faces a challenge in the global fight to protect and improve the quality of our environment. That's why OPPD believes strongly in the wise and efficient use of energy, and has recently set a goal of reducing the energy demand on its system by 50 megawatts by 2012.

To achieve this goal, the education of all OPPD customers, both young and old, is vital.

While energy education is not always part of the formal school curriculum, OPPD is taking part in a new fifth-grade energy education program to do just that. The aim is to get students interested in the subject at an early and impressionable age.

As part of the new program, fifth-grade teachers across Nebraska are receiving Energy Detective Kits and other materials to make energy-saving fun and inspirational for their students.

"Children are the key to achieving long-term behavioral changes in the efficient use of energy and renewable resources," said Sustainability Engineer Gina Langel of Sustainable Energy & Environmental Stewardship. "Beginning with elementary school, educational initiatives like this can help raise awareness of this important issue."

The energy education program encourages students across Nebraska to work with their families on home retrofit and auditing projects,

provides knowledge about the conservation of natural resources, and suggests new family habits, while generating immediate energy savings.

A variety of measurable energy- and water-saving practices are taught and will result in increased environmental awareness. Students will also study renewable and non-renewable resources, energy generation history and energy-saving practices.

Each student receives an Energy Detective Kit that provides them with hands-on, energy-conservation experience. In one activity, students replace a traditional incandescent lightbulb with an environmentally friendly compact fluorescent, and are then asked to calculate the kilowatt-hours saved per year.

"The activities the children will be doing vary in scope," said Gina. "But they are all bound by one goal - to inspire a new generation of responsible, energy-efficient citizens."

In the first three months of the program, over 4,500 fifth-grade students at 141 elementary schools in the OPPD/MUD service territories signed up to participate in the program.

The program will be offered this school year and next, giving additional schools the opportunity to sign up. The hope is that the energy education program will reach more than just the students and teachers.

"We want the program to be an educational tool for the children and the parents," said Gina. "When the students bring home their Energy Detective Kits, parents will also be presented with an opportunity to learn more about their family's energy and water usage."

The program is jointly funded by 79 partici-

## Energy Detective Kit

Students are given Energy Detective Kits to take home with the following devices.

**Kitchen aerator.** Controls and reduces the amount of water coming out of the faucet.

**CFLs.** Replace traditional incandescent lightbulbs. CFLs can last up to 10 times longer and use 75 percent less energy than an incandescent lightbulb.

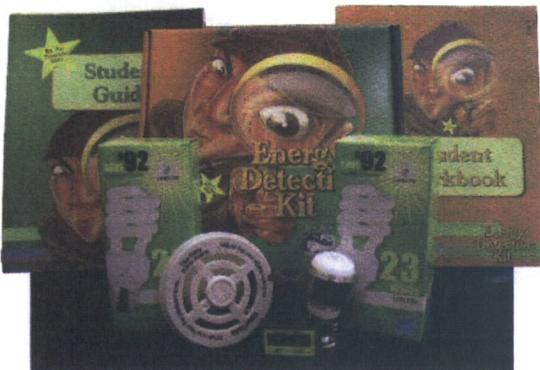
**Digital thermometer.** Measures the temperature of the refrigerator, freezer and hot water in the home. Overcooling your refrigerator and freezer, as well as overheating your water, is a waste of energy.

**FilterTone® alarm.** Makes a whistling sound when the furnace filter needs to be cleaned or changed. Properly maintaining your home's heating and cooling system is a significant way to save energy, improve efficiency and extend operating life.

pating Nebraska electric and natural gas utilities and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, administered by the Nebraska Energy Office. The curriculum, which meets Nebraska's state education standards for math and science, was developed by Resource Action Programs, a national leader in providing energy education materials.

“The energy education program is designed to change attitudes about energy use among the future generation and ultimately lead to short- and long-term energy savings,” said Gina. “It’s an important part of OPPD’s effort to improve environmental sustainability.”

**By Althea Pietsch**





At right, fifth graders at St. Stephen the Martyr school in Omaha received a visit from the Energy Detective as they studied the materials.