

EARTH HOUR SPOTLIGHTS SUSTAINABILITY: PHOENIX TO JOIN FAR- REACHING BLACKOUT

by Jonathan Fink
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On Saturday evening, Arizona State University's University Center building at the downtown Phoenix campus will go completely dark for one hour. The voluntary blackout is a symbol of ASU's commitment to Earth Hour 2008 – a global effort to build awareness around the need for action on climate change.

ASU's University Center and the entire downtown Phoenix area will join Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and a host of other cities around the globe in turning off all non-essential lighting from 8 to 9 p.m. local time.

The worldwide blackout is meant to demonstrate how global collaborative efforts can inspire positive change for the environment. In 2007, the first Earth Hour in Sydney, Australia, succeeded in prompting more than 2.2 million people and more than 2,100 businesses to turn off their lights. According to the World Wildlife Fund, an Earth Hour 2008 sponsor, the amount of greenhouse

gases reduced during Earth Hour 2007, if sustained for one year, would be equal to removing almost 50,000 cars from the road during that same period.

Why is ASU taking this symbolic step, along with thousands of people in Phoenix, surrounding cities and millions of people around the world? We recognize that our efforts are part of a global movement toward a more sustainable future. We are strongly encouraging all faculty, staff and students – especially those living in residence halls – to participate as well.

As Phoenix is one of just four cities in the U.S. chosen as national Earth Hour focal points, ASU is joined by many other key organizations in working to make the Valley's Earth Hour a success. Among those leading the effort are Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, Arizona Public Service, Salt River Project and the Downtown Phoenix Partnership.

According to organizers, Earth Hour is about more than just an hour without lights. It is about how small lifestyle changes can create huge environmental impacts when they are part of a larger coordinated effort. The intent is to encourage everyone to be more conscious about their environmental impacts and to take daily action - for example, switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and turning off unused lights.

For more information and to sign up for Earth Hour 2008, visit EarthHour.org. For more on the Global Institute of Sustainability, go to sustainability.asu.edu.

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