Join a global effort to reduce your carbon footprint on Saturday, March 28 for one hour starting at 8:30 p.m. What you need to do is so simple: turn your lights off from 8:30-9:30 p.m. to cast your vote for a call to action on climate change and to honor Earth.

Earth Hour began in Sydney, Australia in 2007 with 2.2 million homes and businesses switching off their lights for one hour. In 2008, the movement grew to include 50 million people, along with global landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Rome's Colosseum, the Sydney Opera House and the Coca Cola billboard in Times Square.

Australia alone reduced their carbon foot print by 10.2 percent. Their target was to achieve a five percent reduction. In doing this they learned if their commercial sector turned off lights when the buildings were not in use and combined this action with other cost-effective technology, they could reduce lighting emissions by 70 to 80 percent.

By joining this effort and turning off all nonessential lights for one hour, people have begun to see how one small local action can affect the entire planet. It's up to individuals to decide to take further action on a daily basis.

Normally, the public does not associate Extension with participating in our clean energy economy. We are better known for 4-H youth development, agriculture and horticulture as well as family, consumer science educational programs. As a trusted information source on these topics as well as biomass, carbon sequestration, geothermal, solar and wind energy, CSU Extension is leading the way to help reduce carbon footprints.

Working with communities around Colorado on clean energy, CSU Extension has now included in its menu of educational opportunities through the Clean Energy Strategic Initiative Team (CESIT). Seven subcommittees will research and learn relevant information about clean energy industries or opportunities within Extension. The purpose of these groups is to educate both Extension agents and community members at large.

Topic areas for the seven subcommittees include: solar, wind, biomass and biofuels, geothermal and hydropower, homes and community, 4-H and schools, grants and funding.

Help us to help you make a bigger impact in 2009. 538 cities and towns in 75 countries have signed up to turn their lights off. Why not Colorado?

This is yet another way you can make a positive impact doing one small change. Earth Hour has a target of one billion votes for 2009. This is one time when all the small changes we do make a big difference toward a better quality of life on Earth.

To read more on Earth Hour, or to sign-up online, go to www.earthhour.org.