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Business

Lighter fare: Chick's in West Haven saving thousands with energy program

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WEST HAVEN — A seafood landmark has gone green, saving thousands of dollars by installing energy-saving equipment that, over the products' lifetimes, will save 468,000 kilowatt-hours — the equivalent of 109 acres of trees, or 44,911 gallons of gas.

Chick's Drive-In, 183 Beach Ave., was celebrated Tuesday for participating in the Small Business Energy Advantage Program, making improvements to lighting and refrigeration equipment that are saving owner Joseph "Chick" Celentano hundreds of dollars each month on his electricity bill.

"I never thought the savings would be so much," said Celentano, who received praise and a plaque from the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund and the Northeast Energy Efficiency Council. "I would recommend it to anyone."

In July, representatives from the Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund, which is administered by The United Illuminating Co., approached Celentano about slicing his energy needs.

The fund — which is paid into by all UI customers — exists to help small-business owners save on energy bills, cutting down energy demands and the need for energy companies to build more facilities and increase fees, said Dennis J. O'Connor, small-business program administrator for UI.

"The average customer is busy making pizza or slicing cold cuts, they don't have an engineering department that could help them (cut energy costs) like at a big business, so we're here to help with that," O'Connor said.

The fund presented Celentano Tuesday with a check for more than \$15,237.71 toward the \$33,000 project.

The rest of the cost of the energy-efficiency project Celentano pays through a loan with zero-percent financing, he said, and the savings already outweigh the cost.

The work took six weeks to complete, he said. It was done by Efficient Lighting & Maintenance Inc. of Brookfield, city spokesman Michael P. Walsh said.

Energy and city officials said Tuesday they hope Chick's serves as a role model for other small businesses that might participate in the program. O'Connor said UI has 17,000 small businesses in its territory, and 4,200 have already participated in the Small Business Energy Advantage Program. Celentano described it as a "win-win."

Chick's is a "landmark" that has been in the city for 60 years, Mayor John M. Picard said. He hopes other West Haven

businesses follow Celentano's lead.

"He's saving energy, saving kilowatts, saving money, and he's helping reduce the impact on the environment," Picard said.

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