



Reader's Digest honored "RelightNY" — which gives fluorescent light bulbs to low-income families — started by students at Collegiate School.

## THEY SAW THE LIGHT

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AVERY HAIRSTON and his high school classmates had a bright idea — why not collect energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs and donate them to families in need.

The result is that more than 21,000 bulbs have been donated to seniors and low-income families in New York City, drastically reducing their electric bills and making a small contribution to helping the environment.

Reader's Digest has seen the light and recognized Avery, 16, and his peers at the Collegiate School on the upper West Side as among the Best of America,

### 'Best of America' HS students give energy-saving bulbs to city's poor

an honor for the "special people, ideas and things that best express who we are."

Dubbed "RelightNY," the project started for Avery and Co. after he saw an ad for Starbucks that stated if everyone in the Northeast used just one energy-saving bulb instead of the old incandescents, it would be equivalent to saving carbon emissions from 89,000 cars.

So the 10th-grader and his friends wrote to individuals and corporations asking for dona-

tions to buy compact fluorescent light bulbs.

"We've donated bulbs to low-income families in all five boroughs," he said.

On days off from the all-male school, the nation's oldest independent school, the teens go to impoverished areas and bring the bulbs with them.

The fluorescent lights not only reduce electric bills, they last longer than conventional bulbs. And the experience often instills a new respect among the recipients for the environment.

"They can't go out and buy a Prius," Avery's mother, Sara, explained. "But they [the recipients] have a sense of empowerment and do other things, like unplugging the microwave, cutting down on the air conditioning" and shopping more carefully.

Avery's environmental awareness started with a slide show by former Vice President Al Gore at the Ethical Culture Society. Avery went along reluctantly with his mom.

The environment issue was "not on his radar," she said, but in time he got involved and classmates enthusiastically embraced the idea.

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