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Business Offers 'Green' Holiday Light Service

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One local business is letting its customers get into the holiday spirit and the spirit of going green with a new offer.

The holiday lighting service is popular for Albemarle Window Cleaning this time of year. The difference this time around is that along with design and installation of high efficiency LED lights, AWC is offering customers the option of purchasing carbon off-setting. [Carbon offsetting is a way to reduce carbon dioxide \(or green house gas emissions\) through balancing or canceling out the gases through environmental steps such as planting trees, reducing electricity use, and driving less.](#) A business like AWC can seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a carbon offsetting program by purchasing credits through emissions reductions projects.

[The methods and benefits of carbon offsetting are disputed](#), but for AWC Owner Jim Harshaw it was a "no brainer" green option after calculating the carbon footprint from his company's professional grade holiday. As he explained it, "The return on the investment is for the environment and my personal peace of mind, as well as in the image of my business. We take great care to be a good member of the community...this is one of the things that we do."

The carbon footprint of each home depends on the amount of lighting. To arrive at the figure, Harshaw determines the total amount of power in watts, then converts it to kilowatt hours and plugs it in the carbon calculator at www.carbonfund.org. He estimates each residence would need to purchase between \$10 and \$20 of credit to offset the holiday lights that his business installs.

According to Harshaw, though the business is purchasing the carbon offsetting, the cost for AWC for providing carbon offsetting is little. "The only cost I have is in the time it takes to calculate the offset and to get the word out to customers about the program," he said.

AWC is also using Carbon Fund as its mode for carbon offsetting. Harshaw says the organization seems like a good one to pair with: "They have third party verification that audits the company's projects to make sure donors' money is going to what they pay for and that the work is really being done."

In addition to carbon offsetting for his customers, Harshaw is adding carbon offsetting to his business. AWC is purchasing carbon offsetting for their vehicles this year. The business already has other green practices such as buying from local vendors, using CFL light bulbs in the office, and using biodegradable solutions and products in their window cleaning and gutter protection services.

As far as the thousands of strands of holiday lights AWC puts up each year, Harshaw says when they burn out they are recycled locally at Coiners Scrap Metal in Charlottesville.

Reported by Meta Pettus



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