In a span of just a few months, Rothe has replaced an aging air conditioning unit and traded fluorescent lights and 150-watt incandescent bulbs in his 2,500-square-foot store and 2,000-square-foot greenhouse for cooler LED options. His inspiration came from his work as the school board director for the Methacton School District, which embarked on a project to replace fluorescent fixtures with LED lights.

“When I saw the energy savings potential [in the school district], I looked at my business to see if this was something that would work,” he said. “The cost savings in replacing only about 30 percent of my fixtures has more than paid for the bulbs and fixtures themselves. All these little savings really add up.”

Rothe also expects the savings from a new air conditioning unit will pay for that investment by fall. And, now that he’s started the energy revamp, Rothe has no plans to stop. Already on his to-do list for 2017: replace the remaining two air conditioning units and replace all of the remaining lighting fixtures with more efficient options.

His advice for florists who want to follow his lead:

- **Start small.** “Replace all track lighting with LEDs if you can,” he said. “Look at any fixture that is on most of the day, and go with those next.”
- **Remember wall fixtures.** “I replaced four 20-watt bulbs that we have in two chandelier-type wall sconces with four LEDs that use just four watts each. We went from 80 watts to just 16.” Rothe also invested in a $17 LED dimmer that he installed in place of the wall switch.
- **Find a trusted source.** As you cut costs, don’t cut corners. “When replacing bulbs, spend the extra money and buy good, quality LEDs,” Rothe said. “There are off-brands out there you want to avoid.” He looks to his local hardware store for guidance.
WHEN DO CONSUMERS GO HALLOWEEN SHOPPING?

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BENCHMARK

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**SOURCE:** National Retail Federation, nrffoundation.com

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BEST PRACTICES

PUT UNUSED GOODS TO CHARITABLE USE

Penny Kiger of Woodland Floral in Kalispell, Montana, used to feel overwhelmed by her shop’s approach to handling charitable donations. She was getting constant requests from community nonprofits and school groups for flowers, gift certificates or financial help, and she found herself often saying no, even to efforts she really wanted to support.

Then one day, she looked around her shop and saw a potential answer to her challenge, in the form of unsold inventory sitting on her shelves.

Today, Kiger routinely fills fundraising requests for about a dozen groups a year by offering baskets of perfectly good merchandise and products that just haven’t sold yet. The effort clears out her shelves and leaves recipients beaming (and talking about her generosity around town).

“We use products that we have had on the shelves that still look great,” she said.

Kiger’s favorite items to donate lately include permanent botanicals in extra containers and leftover Christmas gift items, including tree ornaments. With a little extra love, the ornament donations in particular can be a big hit, she said.

“We used to just give a box of ornaments that we mixed together for groups,” she explained, “but we have found that if we do a basket or combo of different items together and have it ready for display for them, they are much happier to receive.” (Also good for Kiger? The boxed ornaments technically cost more than the less expensive but more unique mix-and-match baskets the recipients prefer.)

In addition to moving unsold inventory, the new approach also lets Kiger say yes more often, and she thinks that’s good for business and for her brand in the community.

“I have been involved in booster clubs that are constantly needing items for fundraisers, and I know how difficult it is to get a yes from people,” she said. “This approach, in my opinion, has been an amazing marketing and advertisement tool. It gets our name out in the community even more than it is already.”

GO DEEPER

Read about other florists’ approaches to charitable donations, including how a shop in Wilmington, North Carolina, instituted a grant program to streamline its process for receiving and filling donation requests at safnow.org/moreonline.

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GIVE AWAY

Four years ago, Penny Kiger of Woodland Floral in Kalispell, Montana, stopped giving gift cards and cash to area groups. Today, she gives out baskets made of unsold inventory.