

THE TENNESSEAN

FEBRUARY 13, 2009

Nashvillians can join Earth Hour by flipping switch

March 28 event will offer acoustic party

By Chris Echegaray
THE TENNESSEAN

The three neon-lit pigs jumping over Lower Broadway — one of Nashville's iconic signs among the honky-tonks — will get their first respite on March 28.

The Jack's Bar-B-Que sign will go dark from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. along with other businesses as Nashville joins Earth Hour, an international movement by the World Wildlife Fund calling attention to climate change.

Mayor Karl Dean and local celebrities announced the city's participation in Earth Hour at The Stage on Thursday. Nashville was selected as a flagship city to partic-

ipate in the event, along with London, Paris, Rome, Mumbai, Atlanta, Chicago, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami and San Francisco. Worldwide, 377 cities have committed. More than 50 million people are expected to take part.

Nashvillians are asked a simple task: Turn off your lights for one hour. And, if you want, join the party downtown, where local artists are asked to perform

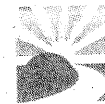
acoustically at the venues as the city shuts its lights off. Recording artists Jo Dee Messina, Kathy Mattea and Big Kenny joined Dean in launching the effort.

"My goal is to make Nashville the greenest city in the South," Dean said.

Local organizers said they haven't lined up the entertainment

» EARTH, 8A

ONLINE



Log on to TennesseeGreen.com

for a video of Nashville's Earth Hour

kickoff and photos from last year's event, plus news and information about local environmental issues.

Darkness sends message of caring

» EARTH FROM 1A

for the downtown event but will make an announcement when they do.

Jack Cawthon, owner of Jack's, said he'd be cutting power to the famous neon sign that's never been turned off in nearly 15 years.

It was one of the first neon signs to go up on Lower Broadway after a contentious battle over Planet Hollywood's globe at Fourth and Broadway. Without approval, the now-defunct Planet Hollywood erected its trademark, rotating massive globe to the dismay of the Metro Council.

"That opened the doors," Cawthon said.

But the neon lights with three little pigs has a bigger meaning, Cawthon said. "One of the councilors had said that if they let the globe stay up, then it'll be pigs over Broadway."

Now, they're a downtown trademark. The neon sign is wired directly without an off switch. Cawthon wanted to be sure the sign was always on for marketing opportunities in case television and movie cameras rolled into the Music City.

Honky-tonks join effort

Brenda and Ruble Sanderson, who own The Stage and three other



Jack Cawthon, owner of Jack's Bar-B-Que, says the famous Pigs Over Broadway sign, which has never been turned off, will go dark for an hour.

ONLINE



Go to TennesseeGreen.com for a video of Nashville's Earth Hour

kickoff and photos from last year's event, plus news and information about local environmental issues.

honky-tonks, said they were immediately on board with the effort.

Organizers have admitted the event, in its third year, doesn't have an impact on climate change overall, but insist the movement is not a gimmick. The hour lights are off allows people to reflect on climate changes and reconsider habits when it comes to energy consumption, said Leslie Aun, World Wildlife Fund's man-

aging director of Earth Hour.

"It's a message to the world that you care about the planet, your community," said Aun, whose office is in Washington, DC. "It's a vote with your light switch."

In Chicago, 2.7 million customers turned off their lights for the hour last year. The region reported an energy savings of 7 percent for that hour, the carbon emissions equivalent of taking a million cars off the road for an hour, the Earth Hour Chicago Web site showed.

Nashville Electric Service will happily lose income during that hour and will be able to quantify how much less power was used, NES President and CEO Decosta Jenkins said.

"Anything that brings attention to this helps," he said. "We've got to take control of our own destinies. Reports show the world has gotten warmer over the last 400 years. Again, it's a significant effort by Nashville."

Earth Hour was started by the World Wildlife Fund in 2007 in Australia. Just over 2 million people participated. Last year, 35 countries participated, including several U.S. cities.

This year, Fiji will be the first to go dark.

Contact Chris Echegaray at 615-664-2144 or cechegaray@tennessean.com.