GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Dec. 30, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- It may look the same, but this year's New Year's Eve ball to be dropped Tuesday from high above downtown Grand Rapids will use a fraction of the electricity of years past, thanks to new LED bulbs from Consumers Energy.

As part of its sponsorship of the 2014 Fox KIA HOT New Year's Eve Party, Consumers Energy has replaced the 450 halogen light bulbs used the previous five years with Cree Inc. LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs. The new bulbs use about 80 percent less electricity than similar halogen bulbs and will last up to 20 times longer. The bulbs are among the energy efficiency alternatives Consumers Energy offers its customers. The bulbs are priced with instant discounts and are available at area Home Depot stores.

Garrick Rochow, the utility's vice president of customer operations and quality, along with other major event sponsors, will ceremonially light the New Year's Eve ball at 6:30 p.m. from the Soaring Eagle Casino concert stage on Monroe Avenue near Rosa Parks Circle. The ball will begin its 100-foot descent one minute before midnight, complete with an attached LED sign with the Consumers Energy logo.

"We're pleased to again be part of this free community event which has become a popular way for people of all ages to ring in the New Year," Rochow said. "Helping save energy is our Promise to Michigan. We're putting that Promise into action with the new LEDs lighting up the ball."

During the approximately six hours it will be lit, the revamped ball will use a little over 24 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity, compared to 116 kWh in past years. That savings could power 115

active video game consoles for the same amount of time or light 18 average Michigan homes for a day. Consumers Energy worked with Westmaas Electric of Grand Rapids to make the bulb modifications.

In addition to powering the ball drop, Consumers Energy is sponsoring a warming tent from 6-11 p.m. with free hot cocoa, a photo booth, giveaways and information focused on energy efficiency, Smart Energy and renewable energy, including its Green Generation program. The public is encouraged to share their thoughts on how they will save energy in the New Year. Please send your #2014Promise to us on Twitter @ConsumersEnergy.

Consumers Energy has been a sponsor for all six years of the New Year's Eve party, which has continued to grow each year. More than 40,000 people are expected to fill the streets in downtown Grand Rapids surrounding Rosa Parks Circle. The free event is organized by Cumulus Media, owners of ten West Michigan radio stations.

Consumers Energy, Michigan's largest utility, is the principal subsidiary of CMS Energy (NYSE: CMS), providing natural gas and electricity to 6.6 million of the state's 10 million residents in all 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

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