

# On The Way To 75 Percent Diversion Rate, Schools Do Their Part

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Green Team members Jessica Finnerty, Amy Blei, and Anna Rossi supervise trash disposal as students Charlie Lopez, Elsie Bulling, and Colin Baker choose the right bin. Photo Andy Scheck

Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority recently released its diversion rates for 2012, with Lamorinda hitting the 66 percent mark, a good start toward the 2020 objective of 75 percent. Because collection services are available to individual homes, they are the most efficient at diverting, so the target for improvement is with businesses, multi-family dwellings and schools. In Lamorinda, schools have made great strides toward the goal and are tackling the last pockets of trash going to the landfill. "Camino Pablo Elementary in Moraga has been leading for some years, they are showing us the way of the future," says Ruth Abe, a HDR Engineering technical consultant to schools, hired by CCCSWA. "They should be the first to reach the 75 percent diversion rate."

On site, science coordinator Bonnie Hazarabedian is in charge of the recycling effort. "We started 10 years ago," she says, "and we'll soon be at a point where it will be very hard to find additional things to remove from

the landfill bin."

The first big step was perfecting the lunch time food recycling program. "We have a green leadership team made of fourth- and fifth-graders who supervise the food scrap sorting at lunch time," she explains. This year the schools can incorporate soiled napkins and papers into their compostable food scraps, including the paper towels from washrooms and classrooms. "And what has helped, too, are the families' practice of giving their kids less and less disposable lunch bags, and more reusable lunch pails with reusable containers and utensils," adds Hazarabedian.

Unlike with home recycling, where food scraps mix in the green waste, the schools have the same food scrap service as restaurants. Since the hauler gets revenue from the back end of this service, food scrap recycling is free to users.

"This November we will introduce new small food waste containers for the classrooms where kids will be able to recycle their snack food waste

and napkins," says Hazarabedian. "The teachers will bring those to a centralized location at the end of the day so as not to add to the custodian's work load." Hazarabedian explains that buy-in from all staff is crucial. "We are lucky to have Alberto Hernandez-Cortez as our custodian here," she says. "He got the custodial award a couple of years ago. He is so proactive and will tell me when we need a smaller landfill waste container or additional recycling ones."

Hazarabedian is also working on recycling the bathroom towels and got a new container for the Bobcat Club, the after-school program. "All we have left in the trash now are non-recyclable plastics and utensils," she says.

Abe says that she is supporting other Lamorinda schools with similar programs: Del Rey and Glorietta elementary schools in Orinda, and Orinda Intermediate School where teachers Kristen Nielson and Suzy Kisch have taken a lead on a very extensive program that includes onsite composting and gardening. The other two elementary schools in Moraga, Los Perales and Rheem, and Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School are all going in the same direction, composting on site and involving students.

In Lafayette, the effort is also supported by Sustainable Lafayette and Nanette Heffernan, who leads the Lafayette Green School initiative. In most Lafayette elementary schools, lunches were served by Choice Lunch to the children on cardboard trays that were tossed. Heffernan's idea was to have children use reusable trays that would not have to be trashed – a savings in terms of volume and cost of recyclables.

"It took two years to implement the pilot program at Springhill," explains Heffernan, "there were some legal complications and Sustainable Lafayette ended up buying the trays and creating the system to haul them back and forth to be cleaned (the schools don't have kitchens)." She says the system has been going on without a hitch. "Because we now reduced our recycling by 75 percent, Springhill will be able to go from two pick-ups a week to one pick-up a week, saving the district \$2,000 a year," she commented. "We're hoping we can get the district to finance trays for the other schools."

Heffernan adds that there are more opportunities for schools. She is excited that paper towels and soiled paper containers can be added to the free food scrap recycling program. "That's huge," she says. "All we need

is to get the district behind us and re-train staff. The district savings could reach \$40,000 a year (according to CCCSWA) for a behavior change that is minuscule. Everybody wins."

She believes that it will take two years to get Lafayette where it could be and to reap all the financial benefits from diverting. Her next step will be to reach out to all the private schools.

## TEEN SCENE

### The Psyche of Psychics

By Jane Fessenden

In 1997, J.K. Rowling published "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" – known in this country as "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" – a book about magic and wizardry that captured millions of people's imaginations. "Harry Potter, books and movies, is awesome! I literally buy everything wizard," local teen Sarah M. exclaimed. However, this fascination with the paranormal has been around for centuries, and the latest "Twilight" movie is not recent phenomena.

Since the beginning, man has believed that supernatural is in some way real. The excitement of ghosts and telekinesis has been used for profit by industry, through books, television and film, to make millions of dollars. Though there is no viable evidence for any paranormal claims, the industry continues to grow. Are we falling for a huge psychic scam?

Since 1854, the Ouija board, marked with letters and numbers that "communicate" with spirits, has sold over 20 million sets. "I always pull out the Ouija board for game night," says the McDonald family, one of thousands who have a Ouija board in their home. Hundreds claim that spirit boards join the user and the dead by connecting to an inner channel within people. "Everyone is always so pumped to play the Ouija board! It's pretty spooky when you get an answer and nobody says they moved it," says Orinda student Claire R. Though, another line of thought is that the user is consciously or subconsciously controlling the reading device. Even more simply, the power of suggestion.

From bending spoons to telepa-

thy, psychics have used trickery and illusion to perform supernatural activities. Some psychics claim to be able to read one's palm to foretell the future or the past. "I usually followed reading rules but to spice up sessions, I said fabricated things," says Lamorinda mom Mrs. Gee, who once read palms at dances.

Ray Hyman, a psychologist, was once a professional palm reader who was dared one day to say the exact opposite of what the palm read. When Hyman did this with one client, the woman was so aghast at his accuracy that she didn't say a word throughout the entire reading. Hyman now believes that "it doesn't make a difference what you tell them, [it's] more of what you convince them."

Why do we ascribe to these paranormal systems? Perhaps because psychics offer a world of magic that uplifts us in our mundane lives. Though it could be legend, could there be otherworldly things amongst us here in Lamorinda?



Jane Fessenden, a senior at Miramonte High School, loves to play soccer and work at the local Head Start facility. She is currently playing for the Lamorinda Soccer Club and working on her Girl Scout Gold Award.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, [Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com](mailto:Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com).

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.



Nanette Heffernan holding the old and new tray Photo Sophie Braccini

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