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## Waste-Less Lunch at Springhill a Big Success

By Sophie Braccini



Nanette Heffernan wears a week's worth of lunch trash. Photo S. Braccini

Springhill Elementary School in Lafayette is effecting change. Since the Waste-Less-Lunch campaign was launched in February, the school's Green Team reports that the weight of non-recyclable waste has been cut by 55%. One of the high points of the campaign was the school's science fair on March 2nd, where Nanette Heffernan appeared in a head-to-toe outfit she made out of sanitized plastic trash from the previous week's school lunch waste. She was a real kid-magnate at the fair. The multicolor, twirling costume attached with safety pins was undeniably attractive, but it highlighted the sad reality of buckets-full of non-recyclable trash dumped by kids each day at school.

"I'm all for it," said Springhill's Principal Bruce Wodhams, "It is tough to change our wasteful mentality, but the kids have been getting it and the school has won the \$2,000 County Waste Buster Award. Our students are very good about recycling and some of the parents are very enthusiastic." Heffernan is definitely one of these enthusiastic parents. She is part of the Springhill Green Team that launched the waste-less lunch campaign last month, with Jodi Consoli, Meg McAdam, Sarah David, and Heidi Rahlmann Plumb.

"We were wondering how to get the word out to parents," remembers Heffernan, "then I proposed to wear five days worth of trash on my hat as I do traffic calming for parent drop-off in the morning." A creative spirit, the young mother invents visual props to make her point. She built a children's book, "The Great Cowpoop Debacle," out of recycled material to teach her kids about wastefulness, and when it came to finding a way to direct traffic and de-stress parents at drop-off time, Heffernan volunteered to do it twice a week, wearing a dress-up hat. "The funny hat broke the ice a little bit and it became iconic at school," says Heffernan, who has done it steadily for two years, "so the idea of wearing the week's lunch trash on a hat seemed natural. I didn't want to offend

anybody, just draw attention to how much is wasted at lunch time." Pretty soon, the hat was too small and she had to build a whole outfit.

"At one point (during the science fair) I noticed a woman standing off to the side just staring at me," Heffernan said after the fair, "I approached her to say 'hi' and noticed she had tears in her eyes. I asked her if she was okay and she said, 'You're wearing my son's garbage. I know because I see his name on one of the bags. I can't believe what I've been doing all these years. I never really thought about it before.' Wow! That, right there, was the point of the entire effort. Affecting even one parent made it all worth it," concluded Heffernan.

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