

The New Hip Scene:

SMC's Project Green

By Jennifer Wake

Going Green. It has not only become a popular phrase in the mainstream media, but describes a movement on many college campuses reminiscent of the '60s. Saint Mary's College is no exception.

On April 18 more than 100 students, faculty, staff and Lamorinda residents entered the Saint Mary's campus on bikes, skateboards, or by foot as part of "Pedal for the Planet." The event – designed to promote alternate forms of transportation, help people measure their "carbon footprint," and learn ways to minimize their impact on the environment – was the fourth organized by Project Green, a student-run organization created last summer to promote sustainability on campus.

The organization was formed by Saint Mary's student John Stratton, who began a quest for personal change in the summer of 2006, asking Associate Dean of Liberal Arts

Shawny Anderson for help. "I told Shawny, 'I want to become a hippie,'" said Stratton, who was seeking ways to be more environmentally responsible. "This prompted a few brainstorming sessions on what we could do to make SMC more sustainable. We thought that an organization which incorporated all aspects of sustainability would be an efficient and effective strategy."

Project Green's three main goals? Recycling, composting, and organic foods.

The fledgling group spent much of the first semester researching ways to tackle issues, finding the right people to contact, and figuring out ways to create programs and put on events. Composting proved the most daunting task, so the group focused first on recycling. Kaitlin Caruso, one of the Project Green co-

ordinators, says it has been a huge success.

"We didn't have any organized recycling in any dorms on campus," said Caruso. "In the beginning of the year we got a grant and designed a recycling program for freshmen, since they live on campus and will be here the longest." The group purchased large 50-gallon tubs for each hall, with smaller receptacles for each dorm room. The bins are light enough to be moved around campus.

In February, the group kicked off the recycling program with Trash Day. After the breakfast period in Oliver Hall, the half-ton of trash collected was thrown under a tree in Dante Quad to show how much waste occurs after just one meal. Project Green coordinators explained to those gathered that two-thirds of the two-tons of trash produced each day could either be composted or recycled.

"I've learned how much we waste on campus and how much energy we use," Project Green member Marie Conner said. "We have an option of taking hard plastic cups or paper cups for our drinks, so we emphasized that taking the [reusable] plastic is one way to reduce waste. Being part of this has made me much more aware of things I use."

In addition to the student-run organization, the administration has taken additional steps to become "greener." In September 2005, the college began efforts to reduce its energy consumption by 71 kilowatts under a new energy conservation program, new buildings on campus are being built to environmentally friendly standards, and courses such as "Earth and Environmental Responsibility in the Global Community" address environmental issues and offer students ways to take personal responsibility.

"We've learned about the importance of energy conservation, but also how we are responsible," said Project Green member Kristen Thomsen. "The majority of the class had no

Conference Focuses on Environmental Policy in CA

The economic, social and political ramifications of environmental policy in California will be discussed at the annual "State of the Economy – Toward a Sustainable Environment" conference Wednesday, May 9 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Saint Mary's Soda Center.

"Interest in this area is exploding – and we all need to 'get educated,'" said Kris Chase, Ph.D., Saint Mary's College economics professor and director of the Center for the Regional Economy. "We will be sharing perspectives from the government, business and environmental communities. How these policies (such as the greenhouse gas bill for California, AB32) are designed will have an impact on the costs of transportation, utilities, as well as on our quality of life."

The morning will begin with a presentation about California economic policy



Project Green members Marie Conner and Corinne Simpson spread the word." Photo by Jennifer Wake



Project Green collected trash from one breakfast in dining hall. Photo by Kaitlin Caruso

idea what was going on. We talked a lot about how we can contact state representatives."

For now, Project Green coordinator Kyle Broderud says everyone can start by simply turning off the lights and TV when leaving a room. "This can save more energy than people think," he said. "And (if they have the budget) eating locally-grown organic foods greatly reduces our carbon emissions."

Because of the high cost of organic foods, Project Green was only able to incorporate organic foods in the dining hall on a rotating basis. In the future, they hope to create small, organic permaculture gardens around campus for students, faculty, staff and the Lamorinda community to use.

"[In addition to the garden,] long-term projects



Recycle bins on campus Photo by Jennifer Wake

include solar energy sustainability, and the reduction of paper/plastic products used on campus," said Broderud. "We also hope to set up a recycling program in every building on campus. Until we eliminate our waste all together, we can always recycle more, eat better, reduce waste, save energy, and many other things."

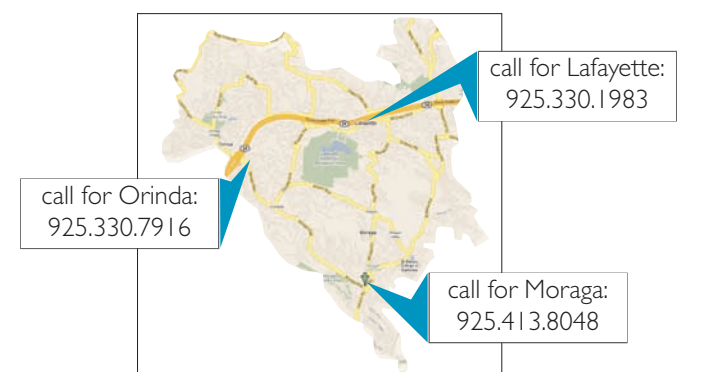
Founder John Stratton

is proud of the success and support that Project Green has received from the college and the local community. "It has given students an organization to help them take actions behind their beliefs."

For more information about Project Green or the SMC Sustainability initiatives, visit <http://sustainmc.stmarys-ca.edu/>.



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Go Gaels!

Upcoming Saint Mary's Sports Events

Friday, May 4

• Baseball vs. Santa Clara 3 p.m. at Louis Guisto Field

We wish all the Saint Mary's student-athletes the best of luck as they enter competition at games away from home this week. For information on all out-of-town games, visit the official Saint Mary's athletics website: www.SMCGaels.com.

Campus Happenings

Conferences/Lectures:

"State of the Economy Conference – Toward a Sustainable Environment" (See story on this page.)

Wednesday, May 9 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Soda Activity Center, \$35 per person (includes luncheon)

Poets Brenda Hillman and Rusty Morrison

As part of the Creative Writing Reading Series, Brenda Hillman, the Olivia Filippi Chair in Poetry at Saint Mary's College and author of "Death Tractates," "Bright Existence," "Loose Sugar," "Cascadia" and, most recently, "Pieces of Air in the Epic," which won the William Carlos Williams Award will speak along with MFA Program graduate and poet Rusty Morrison, whose poems include "Whethering," which won the Colorado Prize for Poetry. Morrison is the winner of the Cecil Hemley and Robert H. Winner memorial awards.

Wednesday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m., Hagerty Lounge

Free

Theater/Concerts:

Urinetown

This production of the Tony Award-winning musical satire "Urinetown" by Greg Koltis and Mark Hollmann is directed by Reid Davis. Set in a Gotham-like city ravaged by drought, the play is a "howlingly funny tale of greed, corruption, love and revolution during a time when water is worth its weight in gold."

May 2, 3, 4 at 8 p.m., Lefevre Theatre

Tickets \$15 for the general public, \$10 for the SMC community.

Ticket info: (925) 631-4670

Nightingales Concert

Wednesday, May 16 at 8 p.m., SMC Chapel

Free

SMC Chamber Musicians

Thursday, May 17 at 8 p.m., SMC Chapel

Free

Special Events:

Undergraduate Commencement

The 144th Undergraduate Commencement speaker will be the Most Reverend Bishop Emeritus John S. Cummins, AFSC. Bishop Cummins, who led the Diocese of Oakland for 26 years, serves as the Seefurth Chair of Catholic Thought for the Cummins Institute at Saint Mary's. Individual receptions, which will take place campus-wide, will follow.

May 26 at 9:30 a.m., SMC Stadium

For more information about upcoming events at Saint Mary's College, visit the college website at www.stmarys-ca.edu/news_events/.

Jennifer Wake is the Saint Mary's section editor for Lamorinda Weekly and is a former director of public relations and writer for Saint Mary's College. You can reach her with any comments or story ideas at jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com.