

# Making an Environmental Impact and Choosing Green

By Jennifer Wake



Members of the Holy Planet Task Force at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette (from left to right), Council Member Greg Wikler, Council Member and Vice President Bruce Veenstra, E-Waste Team Member Dick Enger, Council Member Joanne Tan, Church's Treasurer Bill Klaproth, and the Green Bag Task Leader, Roberta Klaproth

Photo Jennifer Wake

Each year before the holidays, Lafayette resident Joanne Tan goes through her two sons' toys to see which can be donated and which can be discarded. At the end of her venture last year, she was alarmed at the size of the pile of toys she had amassed.

Intent on making a difference, she wrote an article about our culture's excessive consumption, as well as ways to avoid it, and gave a copy to her pastor at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette. After reading the article, Pastor Dan Senter suggested that Tan start a "green" organization within the church to try to save energy, reduce waste, moderate consumption, and advocate a green lifestyle.

"We started simply, like using only ceramic mugs instead of paper coffee cups at church functions," Tan said. Since its inception in February, the group (which includes Bruce Veenstra, Greg Wikler and Bill Klaproth) has, among many other things, started an extensive process of installing motion sensors and compact fluorescent bulbs throughout the church, has distributed a monthly list of simple ideas that make an environmental difference, and is planning an e-waste collection for the entire Lamorinda community on Saturday, Oct. 6.

Theirs is just one of many religious organizations within Lamorinda promoting green initiatives in order to make an environmental impact.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Orinda started a group called "Caring for Creation," which sponsors speaking events, conducts energy audits of facilities, and has a goal of installing solar power.

The Orinda Community Church initiated a green committee that meets every other weekend to prioritize a list of initiatives and publish tips on living green. Members even rode scooters and walked with a green banner during the 4th of July Parade, and the church sewing circle is making eco-friendly bags that are sold to raise money for the committee.

"Every little step we take is truly related to the world," Tan said. "We want to educate and inspire. We're leading people into this lifestyle, and asking them to take the responsibility to do this for themselves."

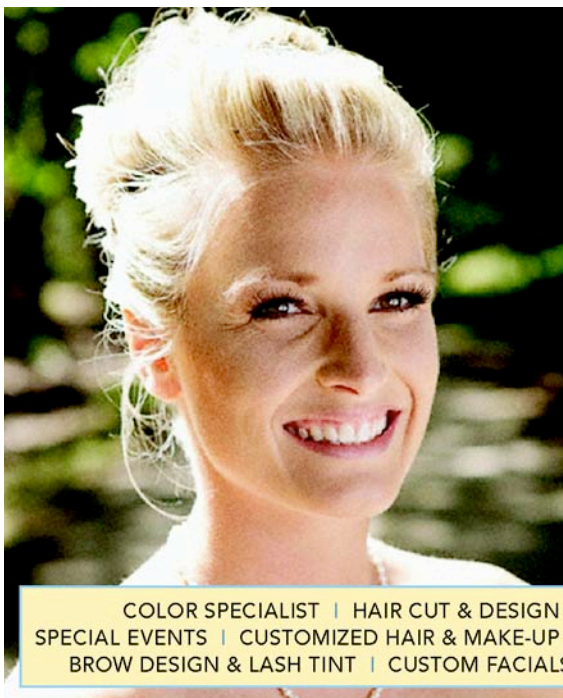
Many of the local churches and synagogues that have organized these types of committees are part of the California Interfaith Power & Light, an organization promoting green initiatives through religious organizations around the world.

But you don't need to be part of a house of worship to get involved. Organizations such as Sustainable Moraga and the newly formed Sustainable Lafayette have been actively involved in reducing the area's carbon footprint.

Last year, Marie Kahn, Myrto Petreas and Leslie Engler of Sustainable Moraga started a battery collection campaign and have since collected tons of batteries that require disposal at hazardous waste sites. Lafayette resident Kana Ryan decided to help her children "learn more about environmental efforts" by starting a battery collection community service project, collecting batteries from neighbors, friends, and their preschool.

The main thing, says Tan, is "to start individually with baby steps. Instead of forcing this on people, we offer a list of six suggestions (such as buying local organic food at the farmer's market, or using a toaster oven instead of the regular oven to cook smaller items) and suggest they try just three of them." Involvement is snowballing, with church members bringing green project suggestions to the group. "Roberta Klaproth sold 'green' bags to members," said Tan, "and Dick Enger brought the e-waste project to the task force."

For ideas on ways you can make a difference, and for hazardous waste site locations, visit the Sustainable Moraga and Lafayette Web sites ([www.sustainablemoraga.org](http://www.sustainablemoraga.org)) or ([www.sustainablelafayette.net](http://www.sustainablelafayette.net)).



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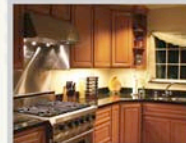
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