

Troop 234 Holds its First Environmentally Friendly Carwash

By Lee Borrowman



Tony Silva (orange shirt, hat) watches the pumps at work

Photo Andy Scheck

Fundraising carwashes have always been a part of life in Lamorinda. Between the Boy Scouts, high school academic clubs and sports teams, few weekends pass without one. Due to policies being enforced of late by the Central Costa County Sanitary District (CCCSD), some of these casual carwashes were having trouble finding a good home.

In many cases, the wastewater from the carwashes was running down storm drains and flowing from there through the systems of creeks and rivers

that lead either to reservoirs of drinking water or into the Bay. The CCCSD has put a stop to this practice, and local storm drain enforcement personnel are out on weekends looking for violators.

So what was Boy Scout Troop 234 to do? Twice a year for the past several years the Troop has held a carwash. Carwash organizer Tony Silva, who admits that his first reaction was "More regulations?! More work?!" had to come up with a way to keep up the tradition.

Using a plug for the storm

drain, a couple of sump pumps and an elaborate array of hoses, Silva built a system that channeled the waste water not into the storm drain but into a floor drain in the bathroom of a nearby service station; a drain that leads to the sewer and a wastewater treatment facility.

"It took a lot of people to pull this off," says Silva. The service station is Lamorinda Gas and Motorsport on Moraga Road. Owner Robert Smeyne donated the water for washing, the electricity to power the pumps, and of course his bathroom floor in support of the

troop. The Bruzzone family owns the land the carwash is held on, and Bill Snider of Moraga Hardware and Lumber gave the Troop a generous discount on the hoses needed for the set-up. Scout Master and chief cook Steve Israel kept the carwashers well fed.

Finally, Silva wants to acknowledge the help and enthusiasm of the CCCSD's Colleen Henry, who worked with him on the permit approval process. "It was best experience I've ever had with a bureaucracy," he said with a smile. "Colleen was very enthusiastic about our system; we even got the permit for free."

Henry asked Silva if he was willing to serve as a resource for other groups, and Silva agreed. He is still working out the details, but expects to offer advice, assistance and equipment rental to other non-profit groups. Any funds raised by this service would, of course, go into the coffers of Troop 234 to offset the \$500+ cost of acquiring all of the parts and equipment they needed to build their system.



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