



Lafayette Resident Involved in Two Green Awards Projects

By Sophie Braccini



Tina Curiel from Campolindo in front of the Green Awards display at Earth Day in Lafayette

Photo Sophie Braccini



Joann Tan checking the solar meter and the tank-less water heater in her Lafayette home

Photo Sophie Braccini

The City of Lafayette and Sustainable Lafayette recently honored ten recipients with “Green Awards.” They are residents that have been vectors of change in the area of sustainable living. Ten entities were recognized, from individuals to churches and schools to businesses. Joann Tan collected two awards: one as an individual, another as the initiator of the Holy Planet Task Force at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church. “I was very bashful,” says a modest Tan, “I do not like public attention very much, unless it can help a cause.”

Tan’s motivation came two years ago when struck by the

amount of waste we generate. Her Lafayette house needed a new furnace so she shopped for a system that would be intelligent, could take advantage of the hot air in the attic and heat differently the diverse areas of her home.

At the same time, she installed a tank-less water heater and solar panels on her roof. “I like a warm temperature in my house,” says Tan, “but I didn’t like the heights our PG&E bills were reaching.” For the summer, she decided to join PG&E’s SmartAC program to slightly reduce the amount of electricity that air conditioners use during those few extremely hot summer days when system demand starts to peak. PG&E can dispatch a radio signal to the tens of thousands of SmartAC devices already installed throughout the area. “This is totally seamless,” explains an enthusiastic Tan, “it’s not ‘big brother’ watching your usage, you can override it.” Tan has more convincing to do in that area since PG&E reports only 258 signups in Lafayette (and 157 in both Moraga and Orinda).

“One has to act at the individual level, in the home, and then take it to the community,” says Tan. That’s what she did. Her passion spilled over to her church, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church and its Holy Planet Task Force. Many successful programs were implemented thanks to tremendous community support, including lighting upgrades with CLF tubes and motion sensors; e-waste recycling event that gathered 15,000 pounds of electronics; congregation education program; selling reusable shopping bags; and elimination of the use of paper and Styrofoam for their events. It is these programs that earned the church a green award.

Tan is now getting ready to embark in a new campaign. During a recent trip to Germany and Austria she was impressed by how these large countries recycle plastics in public places. Every public venue offers a choice of four trash bins, one of them just for plastic wrappers, foils and so forth. Tan knows that leakage of plastic in food has been undeniably identified as a carcinogen for both breast and prostate cancer. She wants these materials to be isolated and recycled.

“We are in a democracy and one power that we have is the right to petition.” The strong willed woman plans to start a letter campaign addressed to our Waste Management Authority. To succeed, she will need again strong community support.

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Other Green Award Recipients:

The youngest recipient was Campolindo Sophomore Tina Curiel, president of the environmental Lorax club on campus. She was recognized for expanding the school's recycling program, and creation of a native plant garden on campus. Tina's current project is getting solar panels installed at Campolindo.

Resident Jeff Kent was recognized for his judicious use of natural energy, both human and solar. He commutes to work by bike every day he can (he works in Pleasanton) with a round trip of 42 miles! In 2007 he commuted between Lafayette and Pleasanton 110 times (4,620 miles). He has installed solar panels on his roof and planted redwoods around his property.

Christina & Brendan Morley and Swatt Architects were recognized for a green building project that addressed a site occupied by a turn-of-the-century dilapidated farmhouse. They created a new home that provides energy savings, greater storm water retention on site, lowered water consumption, reduced maintenance through durable finishes, beautiful day lit and naturally ventilated spaces to increase the comfort of the occupants, and created architecture in beautiful harmony with natural landscape.

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church was another community organization recognized for the reduction of its electric bill and carbon footprint. The Church installed solar panels on its Parish Hall roof and instituted an energy conservation program. St. Anselm's was the first East Bay church to install a solar system, and is the model for three other East Bay churches.

The Lafayette Park Hotel was recognized in the business category for initiating an environmental care program to reduce its impact on the environment. The program has five components. Showerheads were replaced with low-flow, high-pressure units and they have a linen reuse programs for guests for water conservation. For energy conservation, CFL lighting is used in all guest rooms and public spaces. HEPA air filters have been installed for improved indoor environ-

mental quality. There is a food and trash recycling program and a recycling program for hazardous materials, such as batteries and light bulbs.

In the School category, three schools got an award. Acalanes, with Tala Aghabeigi, the President of its Environmental Club, for getting the school cafeteria to stop using styrofoam plates and switch to paper and cardboard containers. St. Perpetua School with Monette Meo, the Master Gardener who has been incorporating the garden into many parts of the school's curriculum. Art, science, and religion classes have been enriched by the garden. There are now master student composters, and the garden products have been made into wonderful edibles that are part of the Friday morning Café Perpetua. Burton Valley Elementary was recognized with teacher Kim Curiel who has been teaching hundreds of kids about the natural world at the Garden Classroom. Kim teaches about native plants, where our food comes from, and the importance of pollinators. Her lessons relate to sustainability, and she is helping our children to have a sustainable relationship with the environment.