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## Lamorinda Schools Make Green by Going Green

*By Jean Follmer*

From Lafayette School District solar installations like those at Stanley Middle School and Burton Valley Elementary, to fluorescent light bulbs, electronic equipment and Caprisun wrapper recycling, Lamorinda schools are placing an increasingly stronger emphasis on being more earth-centered and "green" and saving money in the process. Del Rey Elementary in Orinda added earth-conscious elements to its annual pumpkin patch, and for the past two years, students have been able to play with a giant "Earth" ball and watch solar bags float toward the sky fueled only by the heat of the sun. A number of schools, including Donald Rheem Elementary in Moraga and Springhill Elementary in Lafayette, have recently completed construction of outdoor garden classrooms while other schools have enjoyed the riches of their gardens for many years. These gardens enable students to literally interact with the Earth through cultivation, nurturing and ultimately reaping the rewards of their work. The Lafayette School District is embarking on a new effort titled "Team Green." The group is a collective effort between the District, the City of Lafayette, parents and citizens and will hold its first Green Summit at Springhill Elementary on Friday, Oct. 16. Orinda Intermediate School Principal Michael Randall said OIS has a Green Team of its own. The Green Team consists of two faculty members and a group of students and meets regularly during the lunch hour. "The objective is to increase recycling and reduce waste," said Randall. The Green Team's efforts have resulted in revenue to the school and savings to the Orinda School District. "As a result of their work last year, we received an awarded of \$1,200 from Wastebusters," said Randall, noting that recycling disposal costs much less than garbage disposal. As a result of OIS's successful recycling program, Randall said the District has seen a savings in overall waste disposal costs. St. Perpetua School has started a Terracycle drink pouch recycling program. Terracycle pays its "brigades" to collect certain garbage-bound items and send them to Terracycle for recycling and reuse. Instead of ending up in a landfill, Caprisun and Honest Kids drink pouches will be sent to Terracycle and St. Perpetua will receive \$.02 per packet. Terracycle turns the packets into bags, backpacks and lunchboxes. Lafayette parent Leslie Westphal has championed the effort and also plans to get the program running at Springhill Elementary. Campolindo Social Studies teacher Caron Brownlee is the coordinator of the Lorax Club. "The Lorax Club generates revenue here by recycling cell phones, toner cartridges, bottles, cans, and aluminum. The latter is collected every Friday and the two former ones are collected monthly. We have also generated revenue by participating in Waste Audits that grant prize money if the audit is successfully completed," Brownlee said. Last year, Donald Rheem Elementary in Moraga won first place in the Bay Area in Wal-mart's "Kids Recycling Challenge." The school collected 295 60-gallon bags of used plastic bags and was awarded \$1,475 for the collection plus \$3,000 for the grand prize. "Our intention is to use the money to expand or improve our playground," said Rheem Principal Elaine Frank. "We're also very involved in the (Contra Costa County) Wastebusters Program and used our \$1,200 (prize money) for the garden." Lafayette Superintendent, Dr. Fred Brill, said both Lafayette and Springhill Elementary Schools would be running on solar power by Thanksgiving. Preliminary financial results are promising. "Our rough estimates show about \$2,000 in savings at the two schools in the last month," Brill said. Brill recently requested an energy audit from PG&E to determine other ways the district could take steps to save money. The District plans to pursue a similar report with East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Reach the reporter at: [jean@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:jean@lamorindaweekly.com)

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