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First Green Schools Summit in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



School representatives listen to Ann Johnston in Springhill library Photo Sophie Braccini

On Friday, Oct. 16, more than 30 people from many public and private schools in Lafayette came together at Springhill Elementary to kick off the "green initiatives project" to save money, enhance education and protect the environment. Science teachers, PTA presidents and school lunch coordinators met to discuss their practices and hear what was available from diverse public agencies. Springhill principal Bruce Wodhams and the Sustainable Lafayette School Committee hosted the Summit.

Joseph Lerma of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) explained that his agency can perform free audits in schools, while Ann Johnston mentioned a similar initiative from Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), the Bright School Program, that provides any K-12 public or non-profit school with technical assistance.

Recycling of trash coming from lunches was one of the most popular topics of discussion among the schools represented at the meeting. Lois Humphries, a contractor for the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority (CCCSWA), was a big hit when she presented the "dumpster diving" program. She explained that this educational program shows kids that 80 percent of what goes in the school's trash could be recycled, including the food. Getting kids to do the sorting themselves can be difficult, but it is the key to the program's continuing success.

"We have a pilot program going on at Buena Vista School in Walnut Creek, called Zero Lunch Trash," said Humphries. She proposed organizing a meeting for all of the Lafayette schools to share best practices.

Carolyn Sandifer from Earth Team talked about the free curriculum for schools and the climate action campaign that are developed by the non-profit. Leah Greenblat, Transportation Planner for the City of Lafayette, talked about the Pedestrian Advisory Committee that helps communities develop more "walk and bike to school" days.

Each school presented a project they were proud of, like Happy Valley's Green Week; Burton Valley's Outdoor Classroom; "Caff Perpetua," where students at St. Perpetua School can eat or buy the garden's produce; and Springhill's garden, in which grows produce that is served at the school's buffet.

The schools will now seek to coordinate their efforts and work together. A first manifestation of this movement could be a Lafayette-wide "walk and roll" to school day.

For more information about specific programs, you can e-mail, call, or visit the following Web sites:

EBMUD, Joseph Lerma

at jlerma@ebmud.com

PG&E Bright Schools Program, (916) 654-4147 or go to

www.energy.ca.gov/

efficiency/brightschools

Central Contra Costa Waste Authority "Dumpster Diving" Program, Lois Humphries at

lois@trgandassociates.com

Earth Team, Carolyn Sandifer at

greencaroline.sandifer@gmail.com

Walk and Bike to School:

www.saferoutesinfo.org

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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