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Burton Valley Elementary School Wins Green Award

By Cathy Tyson



Photo courtesy Lisa Evaristo

bar, \$1.90.

With a student body of about 640, excluding kindergarteners, Evaristo estimates that between 90% and 95% of the students participate in hot lunch on popular low-fat pizza day. Even on their worst day about 60% of the students buy lunch. In half-hour intervals from 11:00 through 12:30, kids rotate through lunch like a well-oiled machine - parent volunteers, Green Team and food all ready to roll.

Evaristo describes the Green Team as an extraordinary group of fourth graders that supervise clean up, separating out recyclables - milk cartons and water bottles, trays, and food waste that goes to the chickens at Merriewood next door first, with leftovers going directly to the school garden for compost. The group changes every six weeks, so everyone gets an opportunity to sort.

The school has gone from ten containers of garbage per day down to one - by encouraging hot lunch, and nudging students who bring their lunch to pack it in a reusable sack and to choose recyclable Tupperware containers, or re-using baggies.

Burton Valley used to use sugar cane trays that were completely recyclable for hot lunch, but they unfortunately cost \$450 per month and filled an entire trash can. Now indestructible, reusable bright red trays are used.

To celebrate Earth Week, special stations were set up around campus that the students rotated through. Sodexo arranged for the The Dairy Council to bring Ellie the cow and Della the calf to the school (a big hit with the kids), a station called Germ City - illuminating proper hand washing techniques, local farmer and recycling/composting lessons rounded out the special offerings that day.

One edible component of Earth Week was the first ever A to Z salad bar, offering fruits and vegetables corresponding to all 26 letters of the alphabet. Thank goodness for quince (Q) and a variety of grape that starts with the letter X.

"Every school is different," said John Scatena of Sodexo, "Clients request we provide fresh local food. We are not in business to disappoint our customers."

He continued, "We are very aware of sustainability, we make every effort to get our produce from within 150 miles, closer if possible. It's a requirement to source locally." Because of its size Sodexo can negotiate lower prices, especially on organic items that can be a bit more expensive.

Providing this healthy lunch, "Wouldn't be possible without all the parents that volunteer their time to serve," said Scatena. Approximately 125 moms, dads, and grandparents help serve lunches, estimates Evaristo.

"Everyone from students, staff, and the PTA - really work on reducing our waste, it's a team effort," said Assistant Principal Chris Reddam.

Awards for Environmental Excellence Announced

Dedicated volunteer Lisa Evaristo of Burton Valley Elementary School recently received a Green Award from the City of Lafayette in conjunction with Sustainable Lafayette for transforming the school's hot lunch program: cutting waste from ten garbage cans per day to one, and teaming up with hot lunch provider Sodexo to provide locally produced nutritious options for students.

"For me it's about two things that I'm passionate about - kids and food. We make lunch as healthy as possible; if it tastes good, the kids eat it." Prior to their switch to Sodexo, there was little participation in the hot lunch program, and volunteers weren't motivated - so Evaristo decided to get involved.

"One person can make a difference as long as they have support - help from the administration, volunteers and the Green Team has been invaluable," said Evaristo. She notes that the quality of food from Sodexo is outstanding, and General Manager John Scatena is terrific to work with. "All healthy stuff - no trans fats, sugar or filler. We love Sodexo. For less than the cost of a latte, a student can have a healthy hot entree and all you can eat salad bar plus milk.

You can't beat it." Hot lunch costs \$3.40, if students only want salad

The City of Lafayette and Sustainable Lafayette

recently announced the winners of the 2009 Green Awards, to people and businesses that have contributed to making Lafayette a more sustainable city by encouraging environmental excellence.

Resident Award - Louise Clark

For retrofitting her 52-year old home to become energy efficient and not burn any fossil fuel.

(See our article on page OH1)

Resident Award - Jim Peacock

For remodeling a 1929 downtown cottage with a vast array of recycled materials.

Business Award - Diablo Foods

For offering local products, developing a mini Farmers Market, composting organic waste, offering green household products, and supporting sustainable practices by customers.

Business Award - Yankee Pier

For choosing to serve only ocean-fresh, local seafood, in accordance with Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program and in promoting practices that are healthy for the oceans.

Business Award - ABSolute Center

For being a model of environmental sustainability as a certified Contra Costa Green Business and by their commitment to conserve resources and protect the environment.

Community Organization Award -

Local Food Group

For bringing together a group of determined volunteers to make local foods more available in the community and for starting the Lafayette Farmers Market in the downtown.

Community Organization Award -

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

For creating its Green Committee, starting the Green Business Recognition Program, making the Chamber Office greener, and transforming the Art & Wine Festival into the most successful large event recycling program in the County.

School Award - Lafayette School District

For installing solar panels in four of its five schools to save approximately 20 percent of the District's annual projected electrical energy costs.

School Award -

Lisa Evaristo of Burton Valley School

For transforming the school's hot lunch program into something more ecologically responsible and nutritious and reducing daily lunch waste from ten cans to one can.

Green Building Award - Lennox House

(John & Gwenn Lennox, Faulkner Architects, Tom Alderson, and Brent Buckham)

For its use of solar, reclaimed rainwater, gray water, drought-tolerant landscaping, environmentally-friendly materials, radiant heating and daylighting design. C. Tyson

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