

Published December 7th, 2011

JMIS Launches Environmental Program: Trash Transformed into Energy*Submitted by Hillary Hoppock, JM History Teacher*

Students and teachers of the JM ECO (Environmental Conservation Organization) club standing by the stations students use to collect food scraps and recycling. Photo provided

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM) students are talking trash these days - and that's a good thing! Middle school students are lining up daily to sort and save food scraps from their lunches at specially designed ECO (Environmental Conservation Organization) stations. Color-coded bins for recycling food scraps, cans & bottles, as well as dry paper and foil, sit side by side with traditional trash cans. The food waste collection system is diverting over 300 lbs of food scraps each week to a water treatment plant in Oakland, where bacteria breaks down the food to create methane and power the plant.

"JM students have really stepped up and impressed us," states Kim Lockett, JM science teacher and founder of the school's three-year old ECO Club. Fifteen dedicated ECO club members, five teachers and parent volunteers devote at least one day a week to be on hand at lunch to monitor the stations. Lately they haven't had to do much in the way of discussing how to use the ECO stations. "Our JM kids come to the station and know exactly what to do. It's like they are on automatic as they scrape out the extra food, and recycle their cans, bottles and paper bags," reaffirms science teacher and ECO club supporter Pam Bailes.

It's been so successful that the school is adding plastic recycling to its recycling program in December. ECO Club members have volunteered extra time the first week or two to help JM students recycle plastic and paper (or cardboard) containers. Thanks to the cooperation of the JM PTA, which sponsors the school's Hot Lunch program, most of the food vendors use recyclable containers. The challenge will be to still separate out those items that cannot be recycled and put them in the regular trash bins, destined for the landfill.

Waste Management, Moraga's trash service provider, has been an enthusiastic supporter of the school's program and attributes JM's success to the careful groundwork followed as the program began. All science teachers devoted class time to explaining the food waste collection system and showing the transformation of trash to energy, and will now update students on the plan for additional recycling. JM is very proud of its efforts to help our school, our community, and our planet.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA