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Recycle Lafayette New citywide campaign pushes toward 75 percent diversion rate

By Sophie Braccini



Recycle Lafayette interns take a peek at Whole Foods' recycling practices. From left: Michael Shae, Nicole Nevin, Kendra Tietjen (Sustainable Lafayette), Nanette Heffernan (Sustainable Lafayette), Ryan Kastigar, and Chris Sallstrom. Photo Jane Shafer

front.

Recycle Lafayette hired four student interns from UC Davis, Saint Mary's College, and the University of the Pacific to spend their summer reaching out to restaurants, presenting them with the benefits of the program and helping them organize.

"The program is supported by the Lafayette chamber," says Chamber of Commerce Green Committee chair Marie Montoya. "Many Lafayette businesses are now 'green Lafayette businesses,' and have improved their practices. The 75 percent diversion rate goal is doable and the idea of having interns help is a good step."

Montoya, who works at Lafayette law firm Hunsucker Goodstein PC, says that her firm has made a lot of progress already replacing paper with taped documents as often as possible, printing everything double-sided, using compostable paper, and reducing the use of water bottles, among other things. "It takes the will to do it at the top and training of all the employees," she says.

Recycle Lafayette knows that change cannot happen overnight and that it will take a lot of effort to raise awareness.

"Recycling has obvious benefits for the earth, but well designed programs can also be a cost savings for businesses and multi-family dwellings," adds Heffernan.

Erika Pringsheim, of Metro Restaurant, says that since the restaurant recycles all of its food scraps, it saves an average of \$425 a month. Allied Waste provides the extra small containers and trains the employees for free.

Another business supporter with a recycling policy is Whole Foods, which last quarter directed its Nickels for Non Profit collection to Recycle Lafayette. "On July 18th, we will present them with a check of \$1,386.85," says marketing team leader Jane Shafer.

Whole Foods also supported the program by inviting the four interns for a visit to its facility to show them the different steps it takes to reduce its waste; it claims that almost nothing goes to trash. Whole Foods composts all the food waste on site, and partners with recyclers for almost all of its by-products including plastic bags and batteries.

"There are many opportunities for improvement," says Heffernan. "For example, in shopping centers it is the community of businesses that pays for garbage and recycling, so if one individual business makes an effort, it might not see any difference on its garbage bill. One of Recycle Lafayette's tasks will be to go door-to-door and talk to all the businesses, and all of the owners and property managers. Then to owners of multi-family units." The recycling level in these categories is where single family homes were 20 years ago.

"Seventy-five percent or greater diversion rate is the goal we are giving to our new franchisees," adds Bart Carr of the CCCSWA. "What we've learned is that you can set the best recycling programs into place, but it is the people and their desire to use them that will make them a success. What Recycle Lafayette is doing will be of great

Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation in 2012 establishing a 75 percent recycling goal for California by 2020, and while Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority is working on new contracts with the franchisees that will take charge of Lamorinda's trash in the future and hopefully take the community to that level, with single family residents already recycling at close to the 75 percent diversion rate, it is going to require a change by businesses, shopping centers and multi-family complex owners to make up the difference.

Recycle Lafayette, a group of motivated Lafayette organizations, wants to facilitate the transition.

Its goal is for Lafayette to be the first Contra Costa County municipality to reach the 75 percent marker. The official launch of its citywide campaign is July 18 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall starting at 6 p.m. with the presentation of the movie "Trashed."

"When we met last January to discuss this issue at a board meeting of Sustainable Lafayette, we looked at the data and found that the biggest opportunity to improve our citywide recycling rate lies with restaurants' food scrap recycling," says Nanette Heffernan. "There is a program that's offered by Allied Waste, but although quite a few restaurants are participating, it is not the majority." She adds that among those that are participating, most can easily control the food prepared in the back of the house, but some self-service restaurants have a harder time in the

help in changing the collective thinking."

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