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Lamorinda residents participate in 24-hour global conversation about climate change

By Kara Navolio



Climate Reality Project volunteers organized 1,700 worldwide climate conversations on Nov 20-21, including four in Lamorinda, like this one at the all-electric home of Wei-Tai Kwok. Photo provided

fireplace and cook top.

Richard, a 20-year Lafayette resident, is now retired and dedicates his time to climate advocacy. "My involvement started as a family affair," Richard said. "We saw the movie 'An Inconvenient Truth' with our two sons. That inspired us to take on a project to cut our family's carbon footprint by half. It took us about five years to accomplish this. When a friend and I wanted to share what we did with others we set up a website, and that turned into Sustainable Lafayette." In 2015 he became a Climate Reality Project volunteer. Many of the Bay Area members, like him, were taught by Al Gore at trainings taking place twice per year across the U.S. However, it's not a requirement for membership in the Bay Area Chapter. Now he focuses much of his time on petitioning local governing bodies to make policy changes.

Lafayette resident Linda Flower and Moraga resident Dean Mayer, also trained Climate Reality volunteers, held a presentation and discussion at the Walnut Creek Library, which drew over 50 people. Flower, a former high school science teacher, reviewed much of the science behind climate change and some of the effects we've seen increasing over the past 20 years like extreme heat waves, droughts, ocean levels rising, and extended fire seasons. But the pair also talked of the changes people are making and hope for the future. For example, in California 62% of new energy capacity came from solar and wind. Flower has been focusing her efforts on making people aware of their choices on their PG&E bill to use more clean energy. Residents of Lafayette and Moraga will see on their bills that part of their energy already comes from Marin Clean Energy, thanks to the cities adopting this 'light green' plan. Flower notes that MCE gets 63% of their energy from clean, renewable sources compared to PG&E, which only gets 33% from renewable sources. However, Lamorinda residents can do more. "There's an option on your bill to go 'deep green,'" said Flower. "This means you get 100% of your electricity from MCE. It's still billed through PG&E and nothing else changes. The average customer would only see about a \$5 per month increase." The easy switch takes only a phone call.

Mayer focused his discussion on what each of us can do to help make a difference. Transportation is the number one polluter, not just cars, but also the transportation of goods. "In California it's one area where emissions are still increasing," said Mayer. "One thing we can all do is shut our cars off when we are waiting in line to pick up kids. It's estimated that unnecessary idling of cars generates 30 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. If we could eliminate unnecessary idling it would be the equivalent of taking 5 million vehicles off the road." He also suggested each person do their part to reduce their use of plastics, which are made from fossil fuels. "Scientists predict that by 2050 plastics in the ocean will outweigh fish," Mayer pointed out. "It's time to stop calling it climate change and start calling it a climate emergency." He also urges everyone to look at your investments. Are you supporting companies that invest in fossil fuels? Lastly, he says, "Vote! Vote for candidates with an environmental platform, at all levels from President to local leaders."

On Nov. 23, Kwok gave his 100th presentation since becoming a Climate Reality volunteer. "I have found (since beginning in 2013) that a lot of people care; it gives me hope that we will solve this problem in this generation."

Local climate leaders hosted events throughout the area Nov. 20-21 as part of a global event called "24 Hours of Reality: Truth in Action." The first ever global discussion about climate change was organized by The Climate Reality Project, a nonprofit headed by former Vice President Al Gore.

Co-chairs of the Bay Area Chapter of Climate Reality, Wei-Tai Kwok and Steve Richard, reported that there were 100 presentations in the Bay Area, hosted by some of the 700 chapter members. Globally, in those 24 hours there were over 1,700 presentations in 80 countries and all 50 states. Richard hosted a discussion with fellow Climate Reality volunteer Nancy Hu at the Lafayette Library while Kwok spoke to the AP Environmental Science class at Las Lomas High School. Kwok also held two events at his Lafayette home where he shared the steps he has taken to electrify his entire home and eliminate the need for carbon-producing gas appliances. He and his wife recently did this in a 45-day project that cost about \$50,000 and included replacing all fossil fuel burning appliances like the HVAC system, water heater,

For more information visit: climaterealityproject.org.

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