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Lafayette challenges more locals to go green

By Lou Fancher



A big Cleaner Contra Costa Challenge point-winner (2,740 impact points) is adding green electricity, such as solar panels, to your home.

Sustainable Contra Costa says has in the past saved over 700 tons of carbon dioxide.

The Challenge is a partnership between Sustainable Contra Costa and Contra Costa County and has grown to include nine participating cities. Sustainable Contra Costa also partners with Contra Costa Water District and the East Bay Municipal Utility District in the program that invited individuals, teams and entire communities to share mutual benefits-addressing the climate crisis and preserving precious natural and regenerative resources.

Anduri in an early January 2023 interview with this paper about his goals as mayor on the council for the coming year, said, "The Environmental Task Force have a legislative agenda for EV charging for multifamily buildings, the Vision Zero plan and other initiatives related to climate change. And we're becoming a partner with Sustainable Contra Costa in the CCC Challenge. We're going to issue a specific challenge directly to the communities in Lamorinda, to Orinda and Moraga. There is a platform dashboard on the SCC and the Cleaner Contra Costa websites that shows how much each city has converted into points. Moraga has a big lead right now, maybe at about one million, Orinda has about 500,000, and Lafayette has 300,000, so we want to get the word out, catch up, and surpass them."

The steps to participate are simple. Creating an energy profile is easy and establishes a baseline for carbon emissions from which progress can be tracked. The profile includes the number of rooms in your house, the fuel used in your primary heater and water heater, the electric or gas appliances used, and data from 12 months of energy service and its source (100% green electricity through a utility company or other). Questions about transportation, food and waste are added into the mix out of which comes your profile.

The second step is to decide if you will join the challenge as an individual, small team or neighborhood or community group. People are allowed to join one team and one community group. Action pages suggest ways to receive points and encourage people to set deadlines to accomplish a self-imposed goal. A big point-winner (2,740 impact points) is choosing green electricity, perhaps adding solar panels or switching appliances and heating sources from gas to electric.

The Cleaner Contra Costa website offers a full menu of other actions to explore. Under Energy Smart, line drying clothes, installing insulating drapes, pivoting to smart thermostats and lighting are immediate ideas to implement. Replacing single-pane windows with double-windows, insulating walls and attics, and getting rid of that extra freezer that sits empty for most of the year while needlessly drawing energy from the grid are likely to have a larger impact.

Shifting Your Ride could mean buying or leasing a hybrid or electric vehicle, but also taking BART, reducing air travel, telecommuting when possible and walking, biking, carpooling, and if you must drive, keeping a keen eye on your speed.

Most people in California need few reminders that water is precious, even during years when the drought is less immediately apparent. Which means that taking shorter showers and replacing grass with vegetation suitable for dry climates and installing low flow plumbing in bathrooms are no-brainers. Even so, there are fresh ideas: installing weather based irrigation controls, catching rainfall, installing greywater systems, and other water-wise actions on the website.

A fascinating Eat Green and Waste Less page outlines foods with lower impact and suggestions about ways to reuse, share, store, recycle or go without items to reach your goals to reduce food and other waste.

With everything to gain - and only carbon emissions and planet-destroying habits to lose - there's good reason for everyone in Lafayette to join the challenge. If altruism and humanitarianism aren't enough, there's always that (secret and not-so-secret) urge to one-up the neighbors. Isn't it remarkable that in this challenge, even the "losers" win?

For information, visit www.cleanercontracosta.org

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