

A SORTED AFFAIR
Green Event, Bottled Water
by Jane Bogner
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At the recent Vallejo Chamber of Commerce Installation dinner, there were several tables that were decidedly green. All decorations at the chamber staff's table were recyclable and included place mats made from old Vallejo maps. Minute Man Press's theme highlighted its commitment to being a green business. Vallejo Garbage had a centerpiece made from perfectly good reusable items that were found in curbside recycling bins.

I was a guest at Suite Treatment's table where we sat on bamboo chairs. The organic table cloth and napkins were dyed with organic coffee and we sipped organic wines. Jacqueline Barsotti had a solar powered battery pack under the table to power her bamboo fountain and paperless photo album. We literally had a zero waste table, except for the caterer's cream containers, butter wrappers and sugar packets. For information about making your next event greener, log onto www.suitetreatments.com or call 707 751-1934.

Last Saturday, the Sierra Club took their turn cleaning up Curtola Parkway as part of Vallejo's Adopt a Street Program. At the Zero Waste lunch that followed, conversations turned to the single-serve bottled water dilemma. Sigi Hawkins reminded me that on average, one gallon of bottled water costs \$6 and sparkling waters can cost up to \$10 per gallon.

Americans annually consume 8.3 billion gallons of bottled water spending more than \$11 billion for the convenience.

Across America, less than 25 percent of those bottles are recycled and used bottles do not become new water bottles but clothing that cannot be recycled. Because of last year's increase in California Redemption Value (CRV) from four cents to five cents per container, Californians now recycle 58 percent of these PET plastic bottles compared to 44 percent last year.

The carbon footprint of each of these bottles is huge and some companies are trying to justify their products. The Earth Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. estimates that making one-use plastic water bottles needlessly burns up 1.5 billion barrels of crude oil each year.

Fiji Water is pursuing conservation measures and buying carbon offsets to cover its greenhouse-gas emissions. According to Jon Coifman of the Natural Resources Defense Council, this may be a good start but "it's still hard to justify shipping more than a million plastic bottles of water a day from the middle of the South Pacific, when turning on your faucet at home would do just as good a job for a tiny fraction of the cost."

San Francisco has banned city departments from purchasing bottled water and have installed water filtering systems in their place. Some restaurants are no longer offering bottled water, opting for tap water instead.

Dentists are not happy with bottled water. They have seen an increase in cavity rates because people are not getting the fluoride that is added to local water supplies.

What can you do? Invest in your own personal water bottle and fill it from your tap.

Flyway Festival

The 12th annual Flyway Festival takes place February 2, 3, and 4 on Mare Island in Vallejo. This free festival celebrates the annual bird migration along the Pacific Flyway. The family-oriented event features hikes, birding watching, and wetland walks.

The Family Wildlife Exploration and Birding Expo is held at Building 897 on Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. More than 50 exhibitors from Bay Area environmental, recreational, and historical organizations offer interactive exhibits and environmental information. For more information call 707 649-WING or www.sbflywayfestival.com

VALCORE Recycling Board Secretary Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

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