

A SORTED AFFAIR

Greening our schools

by Jane Bogner

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Summer is over and the schools are back in session. From kindergartens to colleges, green changes help decrease each school's carbon foot print.

The September Sierra Club magazine profiled ten colleges that had made significant changes. They have gone beyond recycling and using energy efficient light bulbs.

Middlebury College in Vermont has a wind turbine that provides 25 percent of its energy. To encourage students to get out of their cars, tuition at the University of Colorado at Boulder covers city bus passes and loaner bikes. Most of their campus shuttles run on biodiesel.

Five colleges use 100 percent renewable energy to power their operations. At Indiana University, dorm residents compete to conserve water and electricity. Last year they saved 614,000 gallons of water and 400,000 kilowatt hours of electricity.

The University of Vermont at Burlington buys 35 percent of dining hall food from local farmers. Last year, Georgia Tech's cafeterias went trayless in response to a severe drought. They saved an estimated 3,000 gallons of water each day by not washing trays. Other colleges are following suit and there may be added benefits. Aramark Higher Education Food Services found that students wasted 25 to 30 percent less food when trays were not available. Some advocates also believe that getting rid of trays will help reduce obesity.

The University of California has 220,000 students and 170,000 faculty and staff. They are making green changes on each of their campuses. The new campus of UC Merced has recycling containers set up in all dorm rooms. UC Berkeley's students find that 65 percent of their dining options are vegetarian, which reduces the carbon footprint of using resource-intensive meat-based meals. The olive trees on the UC Davis campus are now being harvested to make award-winning olive oils.

The Sustainable Endowment Institute released its College Sustainability Report Card for 200 colleges. Log onto www.endowmentinstitute.org/sustainability to find out where your college ranks.

When you shop for school supplies, take into account what the item is made from, can it be used for the entire year, or can it be recycled. Consider lunch boxes and tupperware instead of one-use plastic bags for your healthy lunch.

For students who cannot live without sparkling water or soda, considering joining the Soda Club USA (www.SodaClubUSA.com). They sell a blender-size machine that carbonates tap water. Flavoring for your bubbly is also available. According to Soda Club up to 75 percent of all plastic water bottles are not recycled and shipping these bottles full of liquid is expensive. Their soda-making equipment is reusable and your tap water is virtually free. Their machine uses no electricity, it is power by a compressed air cylinder.

New Recycler in the county

Solano County has a new clothes and textile recycler. Eco-ResQ is located at 5005 Fulton Drive, Suite F, in Cordelia. They accept clothes and shoes as well as linens, sheets and towels. These items are sorted and exported to developing countries. Unwearable or older items are sold to textile recyclers and are converted into rags. Call 707 631-4848 for details. They are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Final Confidential Paper Shredding Event

On September 20, Vallejoans can bring old documents to VALCORE Recycling for free shredding from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.. The service is open to all residents and businesses and is sponsored by the City of Vallejo and CINTAS paper shredders. INFO: 707 645-8258.

Don't forget our local Coastal Cleanup on September 20. Information: www.recycle-guide.com or 707 55-EARTH.

VALCORE Recycling Board Member 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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