Safe Routes to Schools Launches Green Ways to School Campaign

Cash Awards for Top Performing Schools

Marin County Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) is pleased to announce its new Green Ways to School campaign to combat global warming, funded by a $175,000 grant from the Marin Community Foundation’s Climate Change Initiative. The Green Ways to School campaign will feature the new SchoolPool online trip-sharing program, new contests, and cash incentives for the schools that show the greatest increase in green trips to school by walking, biking, carpooling or taking the bus.

Building on the success of Marin’s nationally recognized SR2S program, the Greenways campaign will provide awards of $500 to $2000 for the schools that increase their green trips the most by the end of the school year. Schools will be measured through in-class student tally surveys, information gleaned from the schoolpoollmarin.org website, and participation in Greenways classroom and team competitions in spring (see page 6 for details).

While Marin County has a reputation for environmental stewardship, its carbon footprint actually exceeds the national average. A full 62% of Marin’s carbon emissions are caused by the transportation sector. With international efforts underway to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, Marin County can act locally by reducing the number of automobile trips to schools.

Kick-off Event

The Greenways to School campaign was unveiled at the Marin County Connections Center on January 21, 2010. Parent leaders, school principals and community leaders gathered to view the new programs. With popular Drake High School teacher Jasper Thelin acting as master of ceremonies, the event showcased the new SchoolPool web program and new contests. Marin County Superintendent of Schools Mary Jane Burke opened the event. Diane Steinhauser, Executive Director of the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), www.tam.ca.gov [Continued on page 8]
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Would you like to take a green way to school but live too far away for your children to walk or bike? Would you like to find a group for your child to walk to school with, but don’t know the neighborhood kids? Now you can find your match through the new SchoolPoolMarin.org website.

The SchoolPoolMarin.org site is an online referral service from Safe Routes to Schools that connects families so they can travel to school together. Registering is easy and free. Once a parent/guardian registers online, the site’s trip share function provides a match list of other interested families who travel the same route to their school. The parents then get in touch with each other to discuss carpooling, walking, biking or introducing their kids as bus buddies. Parents who are not looking for a match can still register on the site to support their school in the Green Ways to School Challenge.

SchoolPoolMarin.org provides tips for getting started and maintaining SchoolPools, and it tracks reductions in greenhouse gases as single-car use is reduced for the miles traveled to Marin schools. And it offers incentives for participation. The first 500 parents who sign up for SchoolPool will receive a $5 Jamba Juice card. Those who report their trips through the email questionnaire will receive a coupon from Peets Coffee.

Taking green ways to school benefits families and the community by reducing car trips and the greenhouse gases and other pollutants that go along with car use. The reduced traffic congestion improves safety on our streets as kids walk and bike to school. Walking and biking provide much-needed exercise and establish healthy habits. Also, children who get their exercise on their way to school arrive at their classrooms awake and ready to learn. Parents save time and money by driving less. And perhaps best of all, it’s a great way to make new friends.
A new decomposed-granite pathway providing access to Ross School debuted alongside Shady Lane last October, replacing a dirt path. After almost nine years of planning, the opening of the 3000-foot-long, four-foot-wide pathway between Lagunitas Road and Bolinas Avenue was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Gary Broad, Ross Town Manager, said “When it was unimproved and basically just dirt, it would get mucky with the rain and you had kids walking on the street rather than the path.” The previous pathway was challenging for students riding bicycles or scooters to school, and for parents pushing strollers. The new paved pathway complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The pathway, which is paved with a special brown asphalt material, blends in with the semi-rural surroundings. The project was funded with a $246,000 grant from the Transportation Authority of Marin’s “Safe Pathways to School” infrastructure program. The Town of Ross added $50,000 to provide the special pavement materials.

The project entailed several engineering challenges. The pathway weaves through a slice of public land between Shady Lane and private residences, around existing trees, utility poles, fences and landscaping, and across driveways. Drainage issues were also fixed as part of the project. The Town intends to plant 50 elm trees along the route.

Lynn Langford, a parent at Ross School who was a big booster for the pathway, couldn’t be more pleased. “Shady Lane pathway is being used by kids and dogs, and small kids on bikes, parents pushing strollers, commuting kids to schools,” she said. “There is a marked increase of kids going to school on their own using various routes, not just on Shady Lane pathway. When we turned the spotlight on those two issues, reducing childhood obesity and doing our best to reduce our carbon footprint, it got a lot of people’s attention. People were trying to do that anyway, and we may have facilitated our better interests by improving the pathway.”

**What is the “Safe Pathways to School” Program?**

Safe Pathways to School is the capital improvement element of TAM’s Safe Routes to Schools program. Where the Safe Routes program identifies circulation improvements needed for safe access to schools, the Safe Pathways program provides funding for engineering, environmental clearance, and construction of pathway and sidewalk improvements identified in adopted school Travel Plans.

**Safe Pathways projects are selected based on the following performance criteria:**

- Completes a gap in the bicycle and pedestrian system along a major school route
- Maximizes daily uses by students and others
- Relieves an identified safety or congestion problem along a major school route
- Attracts matching funds
- Respects geographic equity

In 2007, twelve separate Safe Pathways projects, including the Shady Lane pathway, were selected for funding. The next call for Safe Pathways to School project applications will be in late spring or early summer 2010. About $1.5 million in project funding will be available.
Twenty White Hill Middle School students were treated recently to a biking field trip and pizza party in downtown Fairfax. The field trip was designed to provide hands-on instruction regarding the rules of the road and to increase student awareness of some local safety concerns. Students first attended the Drive That Bike interactive class, where they learned about riding visibly and predictably. The field trip, led by Safe Routes to Schools professional instructors, took students on a popular bike route to and from school. Students were taught specifics about how to safely navigate the streets, particularly during these winter months.

Many thanks to Riccardo's Pizza of San Anselmo for their pizza donation.

“Drive That Bike!” is a new Teens Go Green program designed for middle school students. Students get to participate in a game show that encourages them to learn traffic laws and proper cycling techniques while having fun. The program also has them get on their bikes and practice important bike-handling techniques for safe cycling. Teens Go Green launched this curriculum in the fall of 2009, with five Marin County middle schools participating: Mill Valley, Davidson, Kent, Miller Creek and White Hill.

Mill Valley students learn bike skills. Photo by Gwen Froh.
**Kent Teens Go Green**

Kent Middle School’s Eco-Action Club braved freezing winter weather to actively promote green transportation. Students, playing the part of environmentally friendly activists, arrived early to school and marched with signs in front of the motor-vehicle drop-off circle to raise awareness of our collective effort to reduce CO2. The message was well received as several drivers honked, waved and gave the “thumbs-up” signal of support. Students who walked, biked, or carpooled to school were rewarded for their actions with hot chocolate and Clif Bars. With a touch of creativity and playfulness, kids can be motivated to step outside of their old comfort zone, regardless of the weather.

*Kent students promote green ways to school. Photo by Gwen Froh.*

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**Miller Creek Bike Repair Workshop with ‘The Bicycle Works’**

Teens Go Green and The Bicycle Works organized a two-hour bike-repair workshop for students at Miller Creek Middle School. Over 20 students participated and learned basic repair skills. Helped by expert mechanics, they repaired their own bikes and got them ready to commute to school. The Teens Go Green club at the school has been running monthly events to encourage students to use green ways to school. Every first Wednesday of the month, green commuters get to enjoy music, have a snack, ride the smoothie bike and play games.

*(Left) Miller Creek Teens Go Green club holds contest to promote Green Ways to School. Photo by David Hoffman. (Above) White Hill Middle School Green Ways to School trophy. Sculpture by Lou Goodwin and White Hill students. Photo by Lou Goodwin. Thanks to Rileystreet Art Supply and Perry’s Art Supplies for their generous donations.*
Safe Routes to Schools has created new competitions to engage students and encourage them to find a green way to school. Each challenge is geared toward specific age levels.

**Go for the Green**

Elementary students are reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by taking green trips to school. They are recording those trips by putting leaves on a virtual tree. The Go for the Green challenge provides each classroom with a colorful poster of a tree. Every day at roll call, each student who has arrived at school via a green trip – walking, biking, carpool or bus – puts a leaf on the tree. The class with the most leaves (as a percentage of the class) at the end of the contest will be awarded a Green Ways to School certificate and $100. Awards will be presented during Earth Day week.

**Teens Go Green Challenges – a power shift for CO2 reduction**

The 2010 Teens Go Green Challenges for middle school and high school encourage students to shift into a new gear for environmentally friendly action. For these age groups, the shift in modes of transportation from single-family usage to “greener” alternatives is dependent on teen power. After all, who better than teens to assert their independence by initiating change with their parents and their peers?

The Teens Go Green Challenge aims to eliminate the one-student-per-motor-vehicle school trip to school. Middle school students who walk, bike, travel by bus or carpool will have an opportunity to enter a raffle to win a new iPod nano with video capabilities. The classroom in each school that accumulates the most “green ways to school” trips will be rewarded with a cash prize, which can be used towards a class party.

The high school challenge is based on students creating their own teams to win points. Each green trip earns the team one point. The team with the highest score is awarded a cash prize of $100 at the end of the challenge. The teen challenges are organized and promoted by motivated students, teachers and parents in about 12 schools around Marin County. We thank them for their efforts and commitment.

An average healthy tree is capable of pulling 13 pounds of carbon from the air each year. For every mile driven by the average-size car, one pound of carbon is released into the air.
Children across Marin County strapped on their helmets and laced up their walking shoes to participate in the 10th annual International Walk to School Day, October 8th, 2009. Some 45 schools created events for the occasion, hoisting colorful signs and banners as they traveled down streets proclaiming: Bike and be Polite; Take A Green Way; Get out of the Metal and Onto the Pedal; Wheeling to School is so Cool; and Fill up the Bike Racks, not the Gas Tanks. Each student that participated received a color patch from Safe Routes to Schools and the middle and high schools received Z-bars and Fruit Twists donated by Clif Bar.

Riding with Youth

Riding with Youth is a workshop that takes adults and their children riding together to teach them how to safely navigate streets. The workshops are free and are held throughout Marin County after school or on a weekend day, in both the spring and the fall.

**Class Dates and Locations**

Additional Workshop dates available. Contact us to schedule one at your school!

- **Saturday, April 24th, 2010, 9:30-12:00**
  Terra Linda Community Center, San Rafael

- **Saturday, May 22, 2010, 9:30-12:00**
  Community Center for the Tamalpais Community Services District, Mill Valley

- **Saturday, September 11th, 2010, 9:30-12:00**
  Terra Linda Community Center, San Rafael

**Advance registration is necessary**

Children must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Both adults and children must have their own bikes. This class is designed for children in grades 2 to 8 with prior on-the-street riding experience.

**This class is not designed for:**

- Children riding with training wheels
- Children riding on a trailer bike attached to an adult bike
- Children riding on sidewalks

**Workshop Registration:**

To register or to schedule a Riding with Youth workshop contact Peggy Clark at (415) 456-3469 ext 8# or email peggy@marinbike.org.

Online at: http://www.marinbike.org/Campaigns/ShareTheRoad/Workshops/RwYReg.shtml
Measure A, Marin’s half-cent transportation sales tax, provides funding for Safe Routes to School programs in all Marin schools. If your school is not currently participating, contact Wendi Kallins, Program Director, Safe Routes to Schools. 415-488-4101 wendi@marinbike.org

A program of the Transportation Authority of Marin, presented the Green Feet award to Edna Maguire School Principal Lisa Zimmer for increasing her school’s green trips by 18% in the 2008-09 school year. Eileen Smith, Principal of Loma Verde School, was given the Roll Model Award. Drake students Paris Dowd and Ela Engert presented a video that they created featuring their own green-living lyrics for the Beatles song “Come Together.”

A raffle of green prizes, including an olive tree and signed copy of Al Gore’s new book, took place throughout the presentations. Refreshments were provided by Wendy Lee Catering. Children had a separate room where they made bike-part mobiles and did other activities, led by Safe Routes to Schools staff.

Many thanks to Fairfax Lumber for donating pine trees for volunteers, Sunnyside Nursery for donating an olive tree for the raffle, and to Mike’s Bikes and Mill Valley Services for donating gift certificates for school principals.

The Marin Community Foundation
The Marin Community Foundation is the primary center for philanthropy in Marin County, CA and is one of the largest community foundations in the U.S. It manages the assets of the Leonard and Beryl H. Buck Trust and 350 funds established by individuals, families, and businesses. The Foundation makes significant improvements in communities around the world in two ways: by spearheading initiatives for long-term, sustainable change in Marin, and by distributing grants from donor-advised funds locally, across the U.S., and around the world.

Mark Your Calendars: May 13 is Bike and Stroll to School Day
May is Bike Commute Month, and the second week in May is traditionally Bike to Work Week. This year, Safe Routes to Schools will promote Bike and Stroll to School Day to coincide with Bike to Work Day on May 13. Schools will be encouraged to organize special events and to encourage their students and faculty to bike or walk to school that day. Participants will be able to take advantage of Bike to Work Day energizer stations set up all around Marin.

A program of the Transportation Authority of Marin P.O. Box 1115, Fairfax, CA 94978