Green Ways to School Challenge Winners

Loma Verde Elementary School principal Eileen Smith believes in physical fitness. We featured Smith, the 2009-10 Marin County Principal of the Year, in our Spring 2009 issue for her commitment to biking to school at least three times a week. Now her efforts as a “roll model” have paid off: Loma Verde School won first place in the Green Ways to School Champion Awards for 2010, earning $2,000 for the school’s Green Team. Safe Routes to School team leader Michele Camicia and Green Team leader Jeannie Pardi led the school’s efforts. Loma Verde increased its Green Trips (walk, bike, carpool or bus) in 2010 by 15%. It increased carpooling by 12% and increased Green Trips during the “Go for the Green” spring contest by 14%.

“We are so honored to win this award” says Eileen Smith. “It reflects the commitment by staff, parents and students to increase Green Trips to school. Safe Routes to School provided Loma Verde with resources for motivating the students and tallying green trips by classrooms. Their support has been phenomenal. We are committed to continue increasing green trips by encouraging all families to walk, bike or carpool to school.” A full list of school winners is on the back page.

Transportation Authority of Marin
Awards $2.3 Million in Infrastructure Grants

In September, the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) awarded 12 Safe Routes to School (SR2S) infrastructure grants to construct sidewalks, add bike paths, improve crosswalks, calm traffic, and add signs and pavement markings at or near 20 schools in Marin County. The $2.3 million in funding is from the county’s transportation sales tax fund, established by Measure A. All of the projects were submitted for consideration by the local cities and towns and the County of Marin, and were part of approved SR2S plans supported by the jurisdictions and local SR2S Task Forces.
Students test out the new crosswalk and sidewalk at Sun Valley School. Photo by Peter Oppenheimer.

TAM INFRASTRUCTURE AWARDS [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

Infrastructure awards were granted to the following jurisdictions and school areas:

**CORTE MADERA**
- Lycee Francais La Perouse, Marin Country Day School, Marin Montessori Schools: Construct bike path along Paradise Drive between Westward Drive and Upland Circle to connect to the existing pathway

**NOVATO**
- Hill Middle School: Construct sidewalk, curb and gutter and curb ramps, and additional pavement width for bike lanes within Indian Valley Road and corner of Indian Valley and Hill Road

**ROSS**
- Branson School, Ross School: Along Bolinas Avenue, construct pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions and ramps; install traffic signs and pavement markings

**SAN ANSELMO**
- St. Anselms, Wade Thomas Elementary Schools: Reconfigure the Red Hill/Greenfield/Hillsdale intersection

**SAUSALITO**
- Bayside Elementary School, Willow Creek Academy: Make sidewalk and curb ramp improvements along Wateree Street; add new school-area traffic signage and markings
- Marin School, New Village School: Construct pedestrian path from Ebbtide Avenue to school parking lot and construct pedestrian path from Ebbtide Avenue to playing field

**COUNTY OF MARIN**
- Edna Maguire Elementary School: Construct sidewalk, including high-visibility crosswalk and curb ramps, on north side of Lomita east of Greenfield Court to Shell Road
- Lagunitas and San Geronimo Schools: Install sidewalk, curb ramps, high-visibility crosswalk, and signage at Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
- Miller Creek Middle School: Construct curb extensions at intersection adjacent to school’s driveway
- Strawberry Point Elementary School: Construct a sidewalk with driveway approaches and curb ramps on Strawberry Drive through the intersection of Ricardo Lane
- Tomales Elementary School: Construct a sidewalk to close gap on 1st Street and replace drainage ditch with culvert on John Street
- Venetia Valley School: Construct sidewalk on south side of North San Pedro Road and provide crosswalk improvements across school’s two driveways

The six jurisdictions awarded the grants will soon start designing the projects. Construction is expected within the next 12 to 24 months, depending upon the complexity of the individual projects.
In Spring 2011, Safe Routes to Schools will again offer Green Ways to School contest materials to elementary, middle and high schools. The contest is slated to run from March 15 until April 9th. The Go for the Green contest provides elementary school classrooms with colorful tree posters on which students place a leaf for every time they walk, bike, carpool, or bus to school. The class with the most leaves will receive a cash award. Last year, many classes decided to donate their prize money to worthy causes. The Ross School winners donated to Pennies for Peace and other schools passed their earnings along to their PE program for equipment or to their school Green Team.

Middle school students will compete by homeroom, and individual students will also have an opportunity to win an iPod. High school students will form teams to compete for valuable coupons and a cash award. To find out more about the contests, contact Laura Kelly at laura@marinbike.org for elementary schools or Holly Bogin at holly@marinbike.org for middle and high schools.

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<th>SCHOOL</th>
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<td>Brookside Upper Elementary School</td>
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<td>Wade Thomas Elementary School</td>
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Green-Trip Percentages by Top-Performing Schools During the Spring Contests in 2010.
The bike racks are full most days at White Hill Middle School in Fairfax. At a school with an effective bus system that transports students directly to the campus, one might wonder why there’s a cycling “craze.” Part of the answer, according to PE Teacher and cycling coach Kirk Desmond, is the growing popularity of the after-school Mountain Bike Club, which attracted 50 students this year. “Cycling is in their blood; it is obvious that there is a family culture here that supports cycling from an early age.”

It’s true. Many of the current White Hill students went to elementary schools where Safe Routes to Schools was piloted, and grew up in a culture where cycling was celebrated and supported for all, beginning at a young age. To proactively address safety needs of this growing teen population, White Hill introduced SR2S Bike Skills classes to the entire 6th grade. Students took the class as part of the P.E. curriculum. Additionally, Teens Go Green instructors led a cycling field trip during lunch to demonstrate and teach skills along a popular route to and from school. Sustainable Fairfax provided a pizza party location for the field trip. At Sustainable Fairfax, volunteer Renée Goddard treated participants to a wonderful garden tour to explain about recycled rain and irrigation methods, composting, worm bins, victory gardens and more.

There’s more to come at White Hill. A bike maintenance class will be taught to students in the Mountain Bike and Teens Go Green Clubs. Students requested the class because cycling is a way of life for many, both on and off the mountain.

CYCLING CRITICAL MASS: 100 Drake High School Students cycled a 3.5 mile journey to the Rafael theater and back led by Teens Go Green Instructors. This was the third bike field trip conducted by Drake's ROCK Academy in coordination with Teens Go Green eliminating a total of 420 automobile miles and approximately 240 hours of parent chaperone time.

20 cars
7 miles round trip = 140 miles per field trip
3 x 140 = 420 total miles
Hall's carbon footprint is larger than can be sustained without a significant negative impact on the environment over time,” says Ms. Rebecca Newborn, a science teacher at Hall Middle School. Ms Newborn is committed to living sustainably. Her commute from the East Bay includes a carpool over the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to San Quentin and then a bike ride to her school in Larkspur. She says it is easier than she thought it would be because she has a colleague who commutes with her.

Ms. Newborn is teaching the idea of civic action in her 6th grade classes. She created a project that has her students research a selected issue (lunch waste, water, energy, paper recycling, transportation, starting a seed library). The students then create a plan of action, a set of goals, the outline for a campaign, and a PowerPoint presentation that they will give to Mr. Daniel Norbutas, the principal at Hall. Mr. Norbutas will hear the presentations and decide which plan(s) might be adopted by the school.

Teens Go Green has worked closely with the students who chose the transportation group. According to one of the students, Kyra, “We found interesting information that we didn’t know before. For example that green transportation can be healthy and it can also really impact the environment if people bike and walk to school.” The goal of the group is to decrease the number of people who drive in private cars to and from school by 15% by the end of the school year. “We are planning to do it by educating people about how bad the situation is and letting them know what they can do to help it,” says Charlotte, another student in the group.

Missions: Sustainable – A Science Project at Hall Middle School

“Montemos Mas Bicicletas – Ayudemos al Planeta” (Ride More Bikes – Help the Planet). This is one of the signs made by students participating in the Green Team at Davidson Middle School in San Rafael. Students in the after-school program (called SNAP) have been working with Teens Go Green to run monthly Go Green events at the school. Participation is increasing with every event. Several PE teachers, recognizing the health benefits of active transportation, give students credit for walking and biking to school. At the end of November, members of the Green Team will go on a walking field trip to WildCare in San Rafael and later in the year they will participate in a bike field trip in the area. The Green Team is comprised of students from several countries, including Guatemala, Mexico, and Vietnam.

Davidson: A Multi-Lingual Teens Go Green Group

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The work of the successive team leaders has paid off. By the end of 2010, Old Mill had 53% of its students using Green Ways to school, an increase of 38%, which won Old Mill the Program Achievement Award for 2010. They attribute their success to support from the school, the students, the city and the Safe Routes to Schools program.

When Stephanie Moulton-Peters bicycled with her children to school several years ago, she assumed that most people would do the same. “Mill Valley is a community that is connected to the outdoors, an active living community,” she says. However, she was surprised to see that few people were walking or biking with their kids. In fact, 85% of the parents were driving their children to school in 2003. So Moulton-Peters decided to start up a Safe Routes to Schools program at Old Mill Elementary School. She had heard about the program at other Mill Valley schools and joined the Mill Valley Safe Routes to School task force.

She started by organizing the school’s International Walk to School Day. “I decided to copy the Lap-a-thon, with sign-ups and posters, and made it look like we were already doing it. People fell for it,” she says with a grin. She made up maps and organized walking and biking groups from various parts of town. That first year they had almost 100% participation.

She had quite a bit of resistance from her school’s administration at first. “The school’s attitude,” says Moulton-Peters, “was that they were only responsible for what goes in inside the fence line.” However, the school had instituted a “Drop, Don’t Stop” program to efficiently manage the morning dropoffs of students driven to school. The city had also installed a traffic circle at a busy corner next to the school. “They had been dealing with traffic issues for cars,” she notes. “That was my point of entry through the site council. If they could deal with cars, they could deal with walking and biking as well.”

A few years later, Ingrid Tolson took over as Old Mill’s team leader for Safe Routes. She walked to school with her children so it seemed a natural job for her. She took it up a notch and organized weekly walk-to-school days. “I didn’t announce it,” she says. “I was just there with juice and would stamp the kids’ hands. It grew through word of mouth.” Tolson also organized the Golden Sneaker Contest in which the grades competed to see which grade could have the most kids walking to school. “We had huge participation,” says Tolson. “It really exploded after that.”

In the meantime, the school’s Site Council got busy developing its own Safe Routes to Schools Travel Plan, which they called “15 Minutes to School.” The idea was to open up and refurbish the public-right-of-way steps, lanes and pathways coming down the mountain, to allow safe and easy pedestrian access to the school. Site Council members Mary Anderson and Bryce Goeking had taken over as team leaders in 2009. “We wanted to show the parents that it was quicker to walk from the hills than to drive because the steps are more direct,” said Anderson.

Goeking and Anderson built on the momentum that came before them. “Nothing happens quickly,” Anderson says. “It takes years for people to get used to something.” They also got the student council involved. They had the older students running the competitions as much as possible. “For the 5th graders, it’s their last year and this gave them some responsibility,” she says. “They saw it as a reward. That helped spread the word quite a bit.”

The work of the successive team leaders has paid off. By the end of 2010, Old Mill had 53% of its students using Green Ways to school, an increase of 38%, which won Old Mill the Program Achievement Award for 2010. They attribute their success to support from the school, the students, the city and the Safe Routes to Schools program. They’ve seen the program grow and mature over the years. Now they see the kids who are now in Middle School biking on a regular basis.

Moulton-Peters has since run for and been elected to City Council; she also chairs the Mill Valley Safe Routes to Schools Task Force. “It has become more the normal thing to do,” she says. “We’ve hit critical mass.”
It's really about life-long habits. Children get habituated in their life to ways of doing things. Kids are captive listeners. When you give them a message and you really believe in the message, they really listen to you.

– Nancy Wasserman, Wade Thomas Elementary

The Golden Wheel Award. Photo by Wendi Kallins.
Schools across Marin experienced a huge turnout of bikers and walkers for the 10th annual International Walk and Roll to School day on October 6th, 2010. See the photo album at www.saferoutestoschools.org. Safe Routes to Schools would like to keep the momentum going and encourage all schools to declare one day of the first week of every month to be a GO GREEN day encouraging all students to walk, bike, carpool or take the bus. The goal is to continue to increase the number of families who make green trips to school a daily habit. Parents can form neighborhood schoolpools, meeting others in their community to ease the school commute and create a social network. To join others in your neighborhood in getting to and from school, please register at www.schoolpoolmarin.org.

1. Fairfax Library meeting point. 2. Kentfield iWalkers. 3. Strawberry Point School students proudly display their poster art. 4. Loma Verde Students with the Traffic Transformer (aka SR2S instructor Frances Barbour) and Novato Councilwomen Pat Eklund. 5. Manor School parents and kids enjoy the ride.
Joys of SchoolPooling: A Personal Testimonial

By Laura Kelly

Ten years ago, another mother and I observed that we were both driving the exact same route to our daughters’ kindergarten class. We eventually came to the realization that a carpool seemed logical. We decided to try carpooling as a way to reduce our car trips.

The personal time we each gained from carpooling every day was energizing. As busy mothers we were elated to schlep less, and have more time to ourselves. What we didn’t realize was that the journey evolving would be far greater.

For our children’s first-grade year, another mother in our neighborhood joined our carpool and then a fourth got in on our “drive less” neighborhood movement. With four families in our carpool, I only had to drive to school once a week. The carpool provided us with some oxygen to gain balance in our busy lives and a way for our children to bond. The carpool was a security blanket for all of us; it cemented us as a neighborhood and provided a safety net. We mothers continued to rejoice in our simpler, less stressful mornings thanks to our neighborhood carpool.

Over the years the four mothers became fast friends, and so did all of our children. Once a week, our family van was filled to the brim with neighborhood children and siblings who talked, laughed, cried and sometimes even sang holiday carols on the way to school. For the kids it was a daily journey of fun and joy.

As the movement to “go green” in everything we do evolved over the years, I began to feel like a proud mama Polar Bear when it was my turn to drive our neighborhood carpool shift. I was transporting the next generation of future leaders on their way to school and I used our carpool as an opportunity to educate them about the growing importance of green transportation. Our carpool symbolized a conscious effort by our neighborhood to help take cars off the road, and stop our planet from melting.

Our carpool has been in place for ten years and our teenage children now walk and bike together to high school because of the deep roots embedded by our elementary school carpool. Real estate agents often say that you can’t put a price tag on a great neighborhood. Well, I believe you can’t place a value high enough on a neighborhood carpool which saves busy parents time, stress, and gas, as well as reducing auto emissions. I am grateful that we have taught our children the lifelong lesson of traveling green together on a daily basis.
MCBC & Safe Routes’ Partnership with the San Quentin Bike Program

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has given approval to create a partnership with San Quentin State Prison, Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC) and Safe Routes to Schools to collect and rehabilitate used bikes. This is a unique, symbiotic relationship that has formed to benefit all stakeholders, including the Marin community and the environment.

San Quentin’s fire department allows select, minimum-security inmates to operate a small bike workshop. They receive donations of unwanted bikes or bike parts in every imaginable condition. The inmates perform triage. Bikes that are beyond repair are stripped and the metals are recycled; they refurbish the others and return them to the community.

The prison requested the partnership, as San Quentin is not allowed to handle financial transactions such as the proceeds from recycled metal salvaged from the junked bikes. Further, they can collaborate only with government-funded entities, such as Safe Routes to Schools (a program of the Transportation Authority of Marin) and Walk/Bike Marin. MCBC and Safe Routes handle the funds and use them to buy necessary supplies, such as cables, housing, brake pads, cleaning materials and tools, for the San Quentin workshop. They also provide mechanical training. So far Mike’s Bikes co-founder and MCBC Board Member Matt Adams has volunteered the training and has given the materials at cost.

Since its inception in 2008, this “win-win” partnership has developed a working fleet for the Safe Routes Elementary School and Middle School programs. It brings great meaning to the inmates to know their efforts are being implemented in the community to help the youth. The Middle School fleet is housed at San Quentin, along with a supply of helmets donated by Claude Wyle of law firm Choulos, Choulos and Wyle.

The program is hoping to grow the fleets and to offer bikes to Marin needy communities in early 2011. Towards this effort, SR2S conducted a bike donation drive as a Green Event for 350.org’s 10-10-10 global work party. On October 10, 2010, most of the fire departments in Marin teamed up with San Quentin to receive bike donations that day. Anyone is welcome to drop off a bike anytime at San Quentin’s West Gate. Please contact Frances Barbour (frances@marinbike.org) for details.

Donate Unwanted Bikes

San Quentin State Prison is collecting unwanted bikes for their fire station’s bike program, which recycles and refurbishes the bikes and donates the useful ones to needy communities in Marin and the Bay Area.

Bikes with gears (on rear wheel only OK) that have 20” or 24” wheels are especially useful.

Please bring bikes to San Quentin’s West Gate, near Larkspur Landing on East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Please approach the Gate Guard with information that the bikes are intended for the Fire Department Bike Program. Please provide contact information to Safe Routes (frances@marinbike.org) if you desire a receipt (terms and conditions apply).

Safe Routes to Schools Recognized by Regional Transportation Leaders

On Wednesday, October 27, the Transportation Authority of Marin and the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (MCBC) were honored with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Grand Award for the Marin County Safe Routes to Schools program. The award was shared by Cool the Earth of Kentfield, Street Smarts of San Jose and Cycles of Change in Alameda County.

MTC’s biennial awards ceremony, Excellence in Motion, recognizes people, projects and organizations that have made singular contributions to improving transportation in the Bay Area. Safe Routes to Schools was recognized “for its excellent school education program that promotes walking and bicycling to schools in Marin.”
State Awards $363,000 to Mill Valley for Safe Routes Infrastructure Fixes

In its ninth cycle of Safe Routes to School infrastructure funding, Caltrans awarded the City of Mill Valley $363,000 for a variety of safety projects serving five schools. Only nine infrastructure grants were awarded throughout the entire Bay Area. Mill Valley’s application demonstrated a clear need for improvements and showed consensus from the local Safe Routes committee. The enhancements include:

- Adjacent to Park Elementary School, widening the sidewalk on the northeast corner of the East Blithedale Avenue and Elm Avenue intersection and modifying the pedestrian signals to provide a “leading pedestrian interval” signal phase across Elm Avenue.

- Adding a pedestrian crossing beacon at the non-signaled crosswalk at Miller Avenue and Almonte Boulevard and providing vehicle speed feedback signs on Miller Avenue near Tam High School.

- Upgrading the school area signs and pavement markings at and near Edna Maguire Elementary School, Mill Valley Middle School, and Old Mill Elementary School.

Tips for Bicycling & Your Child

**Little Rider Big Comfort – 3 2 1 Contact**

Riding a bike should not be painful. The following tips about comfort benefit the adult cyclist as well as the child. Let’s take a look at the three points of contact on a bike: the hands, seat, and feet.

Stretching to reach the handlebar can be a pain in the neck and hands. The rider should grasp the handlebar without strain. The distance to the handlebar is the foundation of bike fit.

No one likes sitting on an uncomfortable seat. There are two keys to understanding bike saddles. First, they are designed to be level on the bike. Secondly, if a saddle hurts, replace it! Saddles tend to fit or fail. A huge, cushy seat won’t solve every problem; width and shape are as important as padding. What’s comfortable for one person may not be for another; the saddle is the part of bike fit most dependent on personal preference.

Feet are often overlooked in bike fit. An improper interface between the shoe and pedal can be unnerving. For a person to ride with confidence, shoes should be flat, not arched, where they make contact with the pedal. Skateboarding shoes work well.

Children aren’t always forthcoming about their comfort level. Ask your child specific questions about their comfort while they are riding:

- Do your hands feel comfortable when you’re holding the handlebars?

- Does your bottom hurt from sitting on the bike?

- Do your shoes feel secure on the pedals?

Look at your child’s body position while they are riding:

- Does the child stretch or lean forward excessively to reach the handlebar grips?

- Are they sitting up toward the nose of the saddle, or too far back, or tending to slip forward or back?

- Are the soles of the shoes flat on the pedals? Children may feel uncomfortable with changes.

Allow your child to test-drive changes in a controlled area. Make incremental changes towards your goal whenever possible.
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 School.

415-488-4101
wendi@marinbike.org

Support for Green Ways to School and SchoolPool Marin is provided by a grant from the Marin Community Foundation’s Climate Change Initiative, funding from the Transportation Authority of Marin and through a partnership with the Marin County Office of Education.

Green Ways to School & SchoolPool Marin Awards 2010

2010 Green Ways to School Awards for Highest Achievement in the 2009-10 School Year

• FIRST PLACE: Loma Verde Elementary School, $2,000
• SECOND PLACE: Manor and Wade Thomas Elementary Schools, $500 each
• HONORABLE MENTION: Coleman Elementary School; Ross Elementary School; Laurel Dell Elementary School

Program Achievement Awards for the Highest Achievement Since Joining the Safe Routes to School Program:

• FIRST PLACE: Old Mill Elementary School, $1,000

• SECOND PLACE: Tam Valley Elementary School, $250
• THIRD PLACE: Brookside Lower Elementary School, $250
• HONORABLE MENTION: Marin Primary and Middle School; Lagunitas School District; White Hill Middle School

SchoolPool Awards for the Highest Participation in the Schoolpool Marin Program

• FIRST PLACE: Brookside Upper and Dixie Elementary Schools, $500 each
• SECOND PLACE: Mary Silveira Elementary School, $250
• HONORABLE MENTION: Edna Maguire Elementary School