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# TartanToday

Daily news of St. Margaret's Episcopal School

## SJC Mayor Presents Certificate of Recognition to Lower School for Composting Efforts

2 MARCH 2012



At Lower School Chapel this week, San Juan Capistrano Mayor Larry Kramer presented St. Margaret's Lower School Green Team with a Certificate of Recognition from the City of San Juan Capistrano commending St. Margaret's Episcopal School for composting food waste. In addition to Mayor Kramer, Ziad Mazboudi, senior civil engineer for the City of San Juan Capistrano and Craig Dibley from CR&R Waste and Recycling Services were in attendance to present the certificate.

According to the certificate, "Californians overall throw away more than five million tons of food scraps each year. A restaurant, on average, disposes of more than 50 tons of organic waste every year. All food and other organic waste from this facility, collected by the City of San Juan Capistrano's Commercial Food Waste Diversion Program, is diverted from the landfill and sent to a composting facility and its turned into useful products for gardeners and farmers."

 [Click here](#) for photo gallery.

The Green Team, a subcommittee of the Lower School Student Council, was formed to further the goal of reducing the Lower School imprint on the Earth. This past summer, Maddie Barkate, grade 5 student, and Green Team leader approached Lower School Assistant Principal Tashon McKeithan with various ideas on how to green the Lower School. They collectively decided to pursue a composting program.

Mrs. McKeithan met with Director of Finance and Operations David Bush to determine the logistics and feasibility of the project.

“Not having a way to compost the large amounts we would produce, I worked with CR&R to come up with a feasible program for the Lower School,” said Mrs. McKeithan. “CR&R shared with me that they launched a composting program with the restaurants in San Juan Capistrano and although we were not a restaurant, we could be part of this program because we were so enthusiastic about composting.”

For this program, the Lower School would compile all of its compost in compostable bags, which CR&R would pick up and take to its facility to be composted. Prior to the start of the composting program, the Green Team, with the guidance of their advisor Lower School Science teacher Morgan Young, created an educational campaign for Lower School classes about the importance of composting and ways in which they can support this work at home. [Click here](#) to view an article about the Green Team educating Lower School students.

Understanding the importance of educating the community prior to the launch of this composting program, the Green Team, Ms. Young and Mrs. McKeithan met with Headmaster Marcus D. Hurlbut to discuss the details of the composting program. Maddie Barkate composed and sent a letter to Mr. Hurlbut prior to the meeting asking for support in moving forward with a composting program. After the meeting, Mr. Hurlbut gave the team the green light to move forward.

The students obtained the composting, recycling and trash bins for the Lower School (green, blue and black bins respectively). Additionally, Mr. Dibley from CR&R came and talked with the Lower School students about recycling, what materials could be composted, and what was trash before the launch of the program. The program was launched in early December and the Lower School has noticed a sizable reduction in trash since that time.

The Green Team members include, grade 4 students Lulu Arundale, Annabel Facey, Christopher Mullen, Hannah Phillips, Alesandra Pusey, and Nima Samini; and grade 5 students Maddie Barkate (Head of Green Team) and Lily Norwood.

#### **Some helpful tips and benefits about composting from the Green Team:**

Newspaper or plain white paper from the computer is excellent for composting – just remember to shred it first to speed up the process.

Worms love coffee grounds!

Green materials, such as grass clippings and landscape trimmings, are ideal sources of nitrogen for composting. Vegetable and fruit trimmings, as well as peels can also provide nitrogen. To reduce the potential for pests or odors, it is best to avoid meat or dairy scraps and bury any food scraps deep within the compost pile.

Brown (dry) yard and garden material such as dry leaves, twigs or hay can provide the carbon balance for a compost pile.

One of the most common mistakes in composting is letting the pile get too dry. Your compost pile should be moist as a wrung-out sponge.

Compost enriches soils.

Compost helps cleanup contaminated soil.

Compost helps prevent pollution.