

# Keep America Beautiful awards Grades of Green

Ellen Robinson | Posted: Thursday, January 22, 2015 10:41 am

While Grades of Green has been making a name for itself locally, it has now caught the eye of America's leading community improvement organization and has received a nationally recognized second place award.

Grades of Green's Youth Corps Eco-Leadership Program was honored last month by Keep America Beautiful with the Youth Recognition Award.

For the past seven years, Grades of Green has led the charge in implementing a variety of environmental programs in schools since its inception in 2008 at Grandview Elementary School in Manhattan Beach.

The organization was founded by four mothers who shared a desire to enable and inspire students to join forces to implement environmental programs within the schools.

Their shared vision has rapidly grown from turning a small green program at Grandview into a nonprofit that offers guidance and resource connections that help student-led eco-friendly initiatives. To date, Grades of Green has reached 151,736 students from 237 schools in 36 states. The group that started with four Manhattan Beach moms now includes 43 members throughout the South Bay.

In the beach cities, there are 14,700 students who participate as members of Grades of Green. In Manhattan Beach, there are 12 schools with 6,600 students participating.

Grades of Green's website is filled with eco-friendly activities and resources to help facilitate student-led environmental projects. Its goal is to help students develop green initiatives in their own schools that lead to sustainable programs to produce measurable results for their schools. The activities featured on the site provide students with instructions, photos, videos and artwork that give them immediate start-up capabilities.

The organization's Youth Corps Eco-Leadership Program is designed for students who want a higher-level of involvement as green leaders. Grades of Green also has a Programs Team that will go into schools that don't have the finances or volunteer support to implement sustainability measures on their own. The Programs Team is funded through sponsorships and donations.

Emily Gee, who is the marketing director, said the Youth Corp members and the entire organization are extremely proud to have been recognized.

"The students in Grades of Green's Youth Corps Eco-Leadership Program were awarded this honor because they create positive environmental change in their school or community through the implementation of their green projects," Gee said. "Many of the Youth Corps students are from

Manhattan Beach schools and create projects in the South Bay community.”

Joshua, who is a fifth-grader at Meadows Elementary School, has a passion for saving the environment. That is why he joined the Youth Corp and encourages others to join in the movement.

“I’m a part of the Youth Corp and it’s amazing that what we’re doing toward the environment is seen by other people and I’m happy doing it,” he said.

Penn, who is a third-grader at Grandview Elementary, shares his enthusiasm.

“I’m a member because I want to make the world a greener place,” she said.

At Perras Middle School in Redondo Beach, Youth Corps member and seventh-grader Lilly said she likes knowing that she is helping to save the planet and making the world a better place.

“(I’m a member) because it’s a program that helps the environment and I think helping the environment is very important,” she said.

To sign up for the program, a student, parent or school staff member must go to the website to create a profile and register their school. The website is then open to them. There are upwards of 40 green activities and project ideas. Grades of Green leaders provide guidance and connect the new members with resources that are needed to get started on whatever their environmentally-friendly initiative is, according to the Grades of Green website. Grades of Green involves students of all grade levels, from preschool to high school. Each school in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District has implemented Grades of Green programs.

For more information, visit [gradesofgreen.org](http://gradesofgreen.org).