



## Energy-Efficient Fluorescent Bulbs, continued



not always the best choice for your needs.

2. CFs are available in a wide range of wattages from 5 watts to 26 watts or more. The higher the wattage, the more light they produce. Most bulb packaging includes a statement indicating the light output is equal to a given incandescent wattage. For example: The light output of a 15 watt CF is approximately equal to that of a 60 watt incandescent. 20 watt = 75 watt, and 25 watt = 100 watt. Obviously, if you are replacing the 100 watt bulb from your favorite reading lamp, you want the new bulb to give off as much light as the old one. A 15 watt CF (= 60 watts) is not going to do it. Look for a 25 watt CF (= 100 watt)

But this isn't the whole story. Sometimes wattage comparisons are deceptive. This is where another notation on the packaging becomes important—"lumens." Lumens indicate the actual amount of light produced. The higher the lumens, the brighter the light. If each of two 20 watt fluorescent bulbs claims to be equal to a 75 watt incandescent, but one produces 1200 lumens and the other 1280 lumens, the second bulb gives off more light.

3. CFs take up more room than the equivalent incandescent bulb. CF bulbs are often wider and longer than standard bulbs and may not fit your existing fixture. Measure your existing light fixture before you go shopping and compare your measurements to the actual sizes of bulbs available to be sure they'll fit.

4. The light produced by a CF bulb affects the appearance of the colors around it. Some CFs have a blue-green tint. Others a more yellow-red tint. This affects the way we see colors. This brings us to another notation found on most bulb

packaging: "K" (for Kelvin). K is a measure of light color. The lower the K value, the warmer (yellow-red) the light. The higher the K, the cooler (blue-green-white) the light. CFs are generally rated 2700 degrees K through 3000 degrees K depending on the product. 2700 degrees K to 2800 degrees K produces a warm light similar to standard incandescent bulbs and is usually the best choice. Above 2800 degrees K, the light becomes "cooler".

5. Ballasts vary. Most CF lamps today include an electronic ballast which means they light immediately and do not flicker when they are first turned on; however, there may still be some that use magnetic ballasts. Avoid magnetic ballasts.

6. Most CFs cannot be connected to a dimmer or an electronic timer. If you want a lamp that you can dim or put on a timer, look for bulbs designed for this use. There are some, but they are not always easy to find. You might have a better chance of finding one at a lighting store than at Home Depot. Never assume a bulb is suitable for use with a dimmer or timer.

7. Most CFs take a while to warm up. Many CFs appear dim when first turned on, but their light output increases to the desired level within a minute or two. In most cases, this is not a problem, but it can be a bit disconcerting at first. The only way to determine if this is a problem, is to take the bulb home and try it out. If you are not satisfied, return the bulb and try another one. Some reach their full light intensity quicker than others.

8. Fluorescent replacement bulbs really do save energy. If you replace just one 100 watt incandescent bulb with a 25 watt CF, you save 75 watts of energy every time the lamp is turned on. If you replace all your standard bulbs with CF, the savings increase.

## sustainability Institute

by Carol Kittermaster

The first SSMC "Sustainability Institute" was held on March 24, 2001 and was hosted by The College of Notre Dame. Open to the entire community, it was a workshop primarily for public and private school teachers and administrators in grades K-12 who want to include concepts of sustainability in their classrooms. The workshops included:

**Learning About Watersheds and Water Quality** with Neil Marshall, Professor of Natural Sciences, CND

**The Global Athletic Shoe: The Economics of Global Trade** with Eric Bloom, Economics teacher, Palo Alto HS

**Create A School Garden** with Susan Stansbury, Project Director, Valley of Heart's Delight with the Foundation for Global Community

**California Challenge/Action For The Earth** with Mike Roa, Principal, Valley Oaks School in Petaluma and Instructor of Elementary Science Methods, Sonoma State

**Food For Thought** with Matt Biggar, Assistant Principal, Palo Alto HS

**Science Research Projects** with Laura Oppenheimer, Kara Harvill and Amelia Lombard, Palo Alto HS students

**The Heat Is On!** with Rick Carreiro, teacher at the Bay Area Earth Science Institute, San Jose State and teacher at Alta Vista Continuation School

**Earth Day Campus Activities** with Peter Drekmeier, Co-Executive Director, Bay Area Action + Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation

**Sustainable Economics** with Joan Holtzman, Executive Director, Center for Economic Conversion

**Environmental ACTION** with Debby Kramer, Trainer for Environmental Education

A resource table provided materials for participants, including curriculum and lesson plans for classroom use.

The evaluations were very positive. To sum it up, the Institute was a great success! Still evaluating how to make the event even better, we are planning to repeat it next spring.



# Where Has All the Power Gone?

## A Forum on The California Energy Crisis Facts and Forces

Join Us for live taping with Moderators Mark Simon, San Francisco Chronicle columnist, and Bob Marks, Peninsula TV Director

### Panelists:

State Assemblyman Joe Simitian  
Governor Gray Davis' Energy Advisor, David Freeman  
Public Utilities Commission, James Hendry  
CALPINE Public Relations Manager Lisa Poelle  
The Utilities Reform Network (TURN), Matt Freedman  
Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD), Vincent Schwent,  
Senior Project Manager

### Find Out:

- ☀ What Got Us Into This Mess
- ☀ What Are The Prospects For Getting Us Out
- ☀ What Can Citizens Effectively Do

Thursday, July 19  
7:00–9:30 P.M.

1250 San Carlos Avenue (SAMTRANS building), San Carlos  
Limited seating will be available in the studio by reservation only.  
Call Sustainable San Mateo County: 650-638-2323

Submit Questions for the panel by e-mail to [Sustainable@advocate.net](mailto:Sustainable@advocate.net)

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Sustainable San Mateo County (SSMC)  
Leagues of Women Voters of San Mateo County, North, Central, and South (SMCLWV)  
The Bay Area Council (BAC)

# Deregulation Of Electricity

by Christen Young, contributing Stanford student



We've all heard the buzz words: energy crisis, deregulation, reregulation, transmission lines, and bankruptcy. But what does it all mean? What is the story behind electricity deregulation in California? And what does it mean to you, as a private, commercial, or industrial consumer?

## The Old Days

To understand the new policies, it is important to understand how electricity was managed in California before deregulation. There are two important characters in this story: the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and the utilities themselves. Prior to 1996, each utility owned its own generation facilities, all the transmission lines, and substations for a particular geographic region. Substations are facilities that control the influx, outflow, and distribution of large amounts of electricity. The utility would produce at their own generation facilities as much electricity as was demanded and distribute it to consumers along its own transmission lines and through its own substations, with each utility having a regulated monopoly. The companies were mandated to provide as much energy as their consumers demanded, and every utility would present the CPUC with a cost report that detailed the economic costs of producing electricity for that particular region of California. The CPUC would then determine how much the utility was allowed to charge its consumers, adding a fair profit to the actual costs of production.

The state legislature also placed certain requirements on the utilities, mainly at the generation level. The utilities were required to invest in nuclear generation—an expensive endeavor. They were also ordered to generate some of their electricity using alternative or “green” methods,

called “qualifying facilities,” such as solar power, incineration of agricultural waste, or hydroelectric power. Currently, neither nuclear power nor these alternative sources create a profit.

However, legislators hope that forced investment in these areas will lead to developments that will allow environmentally friendly energy production to become profitable.

There were two main objections to this system. First, many economists argue that regulated monopolies are inefficient because the company is guaranteed a fair profit and has no incentive to use resources wisely. The second criticism is related, but focuses on the nuclear power plants. They are often poorly managed, and upwards of \$10 billion per year were poured into these facilities by California rate payers. Partly as a consequence of the expensive nuclear power plants, Californians paid up to 30% more for their electricity than neighbors in Oregon and Washington.

## Enter Deregulation

For years, California policy makers debated a deregulation policy. The final bill, masterminded by California Senator Steve Peace, passed in 1996, with the support of the utilities, consumer groups, many environmentalists, and others. Under the bill, utilities would be forced to sell all their fossil fuel generators to other companies, who would generate the electricity and sell it to the utilities. This was expected to foster competition and drive prices down. The utilities would also be required to maintain their alternative and nuclear facilities. However, because these were not money-making enterprises, the utilities claimed a debt of about \$28 billion, and the state promised to repay these debts in the form of a rate freeze that would last until 2002, or whenever the utilities recouped their debt. Rates were held at a level that was expected to be well above costs.

But how would this utility/generator price be determined? A complicated system, managed by the new California Power Exchange, required the utilities and generators to submit one day in advance their levels of expected demand or production at any given price (the supply and demand functions). Then, on an hourly basis, the Power Exchange fixed the price at the level where supply met demand. In theory, the fossil fuel generators, sold by the utilities to numerous small companies, would become a competitive industry, and prices would be driven well below the pre-deregulation level.

Another organization, the California Independent Service Operator (CALISO), was created to manage, on a minute by minute timetable, the demand and supply of electricity throughout the state. If the forecasts from the day before were wrong, and demand exceeded supply, CALISO was empowered to buy, at any price, enough electricity to keep the lights on. Prices in these situations are two to three times the normal rate. But, because of the inner working of the Power Exchange, when CALISO is forced to buy at a high price, the entire market for that particular time period is set at the unusually high price. This was expected to occur only in rare emergencies.

A final element of deregulation was at the distribution end. The market would be open to private distributors willing to compete with the utilities. Consumers could choose the companies that offered the lowest prices, opt for companies that were environmentally healthy, or choose their electricity provider for any number of other reasons. Thus, deregulation would simultaneously foster competition in the generation and distribution markets, and force prices down for all consumers. But, what actually happened is far from this ideal.

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## The Problems

The biggest problem with deregulation is the phenomenon known as gaming. Many consumer advocates claim that the fossil fuel generating companies do not act as a competitive industry, but instead recognize and exercise their own market power. Consumer advocates claim power companies are willing to sell electricity through the Power Exchange only at inflated levels, and frequently under report their supply. This pushes Power Exchange prices up, and forces CALISO into emergency situations much more often than was originally expected, making the price outrageously high. The utilities are presented with major problems in this system. They are paying very high prices to purchase electricity from the generators, but are forced to sell it to consumers at a frozen rate. The rate freeze was originally set high to help the utilities repay their debts, but because of gaming it doesn't even cover their costs. This has forced the utilities near bankruptcy, and the State of California is investigating using investor bonds and a controversial 54.5% rate hike for residential use approved by the CPUC in early May to prevent utility shutdown.

Another problem is that there simply isn't enough electricity to go around. Even when CALISO is buying emergency electricity at the inflated rates, there are times when there simply isn't enough power available. In these situations, California consumers are faced with rolling blackouts. From the early nineties on, the state had been debating different deregulation plans. Because there was so much uncertainty in the California energy market, investors were reluctant to build new power plants. In fact, no new fossil fuel facilities were built in California between 1991 and 2001, and construction is just now underway for several new plants. Completion of the new facilities should help relieve some of the supply shortages, but will not solve the pricing dilemmas.

A final, structural problem arose from limited interest in the power industry.

**June 2001**

Only a few firms were involved in the purchase of the utilities' generators, mostly out-of-state companies with substantial assets in other parts of the country. There was also limited entry at the distribution end, with only a few firms offering an alternative to the utilities. Therefore, the hope of deregulation—that it would lead to a competitive industry with lower prices—has been left largely unfulfilled.

## The Solutions

There are a number of steps the government and electricity consumers can take jointly to alleviate the crisis. The first priority is to eliminate gaming. Governor Gray Davis is deliberating entering into long-term contracts with generating facilities. Binding the State of California and a specific generator into an agreement at a set price has the potential to escape the effects of today's high prices. But, critics argue, the state is locking itself into contracts when the price of electricity is at an all time high. In the long run there is nowhere for electricity prices to go except down, they argue, and so the prices agreed upon now will force California consumers to pay high rates, even when the price has been driven down.

Of course, there are other ways to attack gaming. Some groups advocate a level of reregulation in the Power Exchange in an attempt to keep prices low. However, because the generating facilities are owned by out-of-state interests, the California government has little authority. Reregulation would almost certainly involve the federal government, potentially complicating the situation even further. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has thus far agreed to price caps only during stage 3, the most imminent of the blackout alerts, although there are pending pressures in the form of lawsuits and legislation to compel FERC to impose price caps until the crisis is over.

There are other types of solutions that do not focus on government action. Many environmentalists think consumer education and

empowerment is the most important long-term step. If the consumer was aware of peak demand hours and was charged more when he used electricity during these times, he would learn to limit his demand. Educated consumers, the argument goes, would buy less energy when the prices loomed at three times their normal level, and this would force power companies to push the costs down.

But even now, electricity consumers can help solve the problems. Turn the lights off, and encourage other consumers to do the same. If you're running the clothes dryer, turn the Air Conditioning off. And stay informed about the daily decisions that affect your electricity future.

## Bright Future for Solar Power?

*by John Cieslewicz, contributing Stanford student*

As a result of the energy crisis of the 1970s alternative energy sources such as solar power were touted as the solution to the nation's energy woes. In the eighties the energy crisis lessened and so did the drive for solar power. Today, however, as California and the rest of the nation face energy shortages, solar power is receiving a fresh look as a reliable, local power source.

Solar power generation generally involves photovoltaic (PV) cells that directly convert solar energy into electricity using semiconductors. Solar photovoltaics, initially developed for space applications, were very expensive and rather inefficient. In fact, the energy expenditure associated with solar cell production exceeded the energy the cells could produce. But over the last twenty years efficiency has increased as the price has fallen, with the solar cell industry growing at an average of 21% per annum. Lower prices and greater efficiency make solar power a more

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**The Sustainable Advocate**



## “Saving Green, Building Green” Forum

The Business Task Force (BTF) of SSMC continues looking forward to new projects and events while looking back on our most recent event, Saving Green, Building Green.

On May 24, 2001, the BTF presented a program on “green building” at the Westin Hotel San Francisco Airport. Seven speakers, from accomplished green architects to experienced consultants in the green construction and recycling industries presented current best practices, materials, and information to an audience of 90 attendees. The opening welcome was provided by both Marc

Hershman, Vice Mayor of Millbrae, and Jerry Hill, Supervisor of San Mateo County. The members of the BTF, now numbering 16, did an outstanding job organizing this very successful event. Planning will begin soon for the next business forum and we have several ideas in the works already. If you have any ideas for a forum, please let us know by contacting us using the information at the end of this article.

Another project still in the works is a Self-Assessment Guide for businesses. This publication is being designed to serve the wide variety of businesses in our county. It is a sort of “rate your business” ‘sustainability’ by answering several pages of thought-provoking questions. Business owners or managers can then add up and score themselves to see where they might improve.

A natural extension of this guide might be a series of breakfast forums, open to business owners, managers and even the public, to talk about issues facing business in each of the sections in the Self-Assessment Guide. For instance, packaging. Businesses could come together for an hour to learn from others what materials are sustainable, or even to hear a person from the packaging industry speak about new materials and choices. Businesses need to know that change is made in incremental steps and that a continuous review of current practices is the best way to pave change towards sustainability.

If you would like to know more about SSMC’s Business Task Force or its programs, please call the Chair, Kim Springer at 650-572-7968, or email to [kspringr@ix.netcom.com](mailto:kspringr@ix.netcom.com).

### **Bright Future for Solar Power?, continued**

viable energy source in today’s crisis than in the 1970s.

Solar power’s most obvious advantage is the lack of emissions, making it a clean alternative to fossil fuel or nuclear power generation. In addition to the “green” qualities of solar power, it can be economically advantageous to businesses, households, and communities. And unlike the majority of power production, which occurs at large thousand megawatt plants, solar power is often implemented locally on the rooftops of homes and businesses, making it a form of “micropower.” Solar power implemented on this scale provides flexible, modular power that by its very nature supplies peak power at peak demand. Solar cells produce the most electricity in the direct sunlight of midday as demand rises. Buildings with rooftop photovoltaic systems remain attached to the power grid, drawing from the grid at night and when the solar cells cannot meet the building’s demand. Excess daylight-generated power is added to the power

grid, making the power meter run backward. This two-way exchange of energy from photovoltaic owners is called “net metering,” and state law requires utilities in California to purchase power generated from renewable sources. As energy costs continue to rise, solar power provides the means to lower overall energy costs for businesses and households in the long run.

Implementing rooftop photovoltaic systems requires forethought on the part of the community, as implementation must be aesthetically pleasing as well as environmentally friendly. Small scale implementation of roof top photovoltaic systems stands to benefit individual businesses and households through a long-term reduction in energy costs. Distributed power generation applied on a larger scale throughout a community with a mix of power production methods, including photovoltaics, can be used as part of municipal power generation that provide communities with the

opportunity to choose how their energy is produced and distributed. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District is such an example, promoting solar photovoltaics to help supply the needs of the Sacramento community in addition to more conventional means of power generation. In both large and small-scale applications of solar power, the greatest challenge is the initial capital investment, which can often be recouped through reduced future energy costs as well as through government and utility grants.

Assuming that energy costs remain constant or rise, investment in alternative sources, such as solar power, makes good economic sense for households, businesses, and communities, but if energy costs fall in the future, solar power capital investments will be harder to recoup through reduced energy costs. Regardless of its economic advantages, solar power remains an investment in the environment through emission-free power production.

# Call for Nominations



Third Annual

## San Mateo County Sustainability Award ■ 2001

**The San Mateo County Sustainability Award** celebrates and honors individuals or groups in government, business, labor, education, social services, religious and civic organizations whose actions demonstrate principles of sustainability:

- Future-oriented and long-term
- Aware of ecological and resource limits
- Regional as well as local in scope
- Cognizant of the connections between things
- Concerned with creating diverse and balanced communities
- Inclusive of social equity and well-being
- Supportive of public involvement in community decisions

Nominees' concrete actions should support the key elements of sustainability: **healthy ecosystem, social well being and economic vitality**. Nominees should also demonstrate unique and creative approaches and forward thinking.

### Past Recipients

1999: City of San Mateo's North Central Goal Directed Action Team, Paul Gardner and Whole House Building Supply, New Start Furniture Fund, San Mateo County Office of Education's Outdoor Education Program, David Schooley, "Mr. San Bruno Mountain"

2000: The Calera Creek Water Recycling Plant, Pacifica, City Center Plaza, Redwood City, Jim Johnson, Streamkeeper of San Francisquito Creek, Peninsula Open Space Trust and Audrey Rust, The Westin San Francisco Airport Hotel



Sustainable  
San Mateo  
County

### NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MONDAY, AUG. 20, 2001

The Sustainability Award will be presented in October 2001  
The nomination form is on the following page. Please submit to  
**Sustainable San Mateo County**

177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor, San Mateo, CA 94402  
phone 650-638-2323 ■ fax 650-341-1395

Sustainable@Advocate.net ■ <http://Sustainable.Advocate.net>

**2001  
San Mateo County Sustainability Award  
Nomination Form**

Full Name of Nominee (individual or group)

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If the nominee is a group, name and title of contact person

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Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Person making nomination

---

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity do you know the nominee?

**On a separate paper, please submit typed information about why you feel the nominee's activities enhance our sustainability and should be recognized. Please limit the total answer to one page.** You may also include information about the nominee's experience, other awards or recognition, achievements and/or endorsements. You may attach brochures, news clippings or other materials supporting the nomination. Do not include originals as we will NOT be able to return them.

**ALL NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2001.**

Nomination information will be verified and may be used for publicity purposes. The award winners and their contributions to our community will be published in our newsletter, *The Sustainable Advocate*, and in press releases to local media outlets.

Please complete this nomination form and submit to

Sustainable San Mateo County

177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor, San Mateo, CA 94402

phone 650-638-2323 ▪ fax 650-341-1395

e-mail: [Sustainable@Advocate.net](mailto:Sustainable@Advocate.net) ▪ web: <http://Sustainable.Advocate.net>

# Release of Indicators and Town Hall on Water

SSMC's annual *Indicators for a Sustainable San Mateo County*, hot off the press, was presented following a welcome by Ruth Peterson, Chair of SSMC.

The Town Hall on "Water: Protect and Conserve" was co-sponsored by the College of Notre Dame and was held at the college on April 19th. The keynote speaker, Steve Ritchie, Director of Northern California Water/Wastewater projects, URS Engineer Consultants, gave an overview on water conservation and its importance, predicting that the next major crisis in resources will be a water shortage if conservation measures are not undertaken.

Charles P. Wagenseller, Mid-Peninsula Water District, speaking on "Water 101," described the basics involved in bringing water to the Peninsula. He showed charts and maps and spoke from a wealth of specific information.

The county is fortunate in having the bulk of its water come from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, which is relatively abundant most of the time and is clean and safe. Wagenseller concluded, however, that all this abundance and good quality still leaves us needing sound water conservation practices as our

population continues to grow and industrial and agricultural use of water increases. Also, as we well know, a period of drought can seriously strain the adequacy of our water supply.

Brief remarks on "How to Read Your Water Quality Reports" were given by two members of the College of Notre Dame's Natural Sciences Department, Dr. Isabelle Haithcox and Dr. Neil Marshall.

There followed descriptions of three "Current Successes and Ideas That Work." First, was the Calera Creek Restoration Project. Scott Holmes, Engineer with Calera Creek Waste Water Facility described how waste water is treated through biotic processes. Following the principles nature has devised in its wetlands, this project purifies water without adding any chemicals. It uses instead selected insects, vegetation and micro-organisms to remove undesirable contents of the waste water and restore it to safe usability . . . for irrigation. The project is now working to purify further the waste water, eventually bringing it to a drinkable standard. They are also restoring several natural wetlands which had been destroyed by development.

Next, Pat Burt, President of Acteron Corporation, described the ingenious methods he has devised and is using in his metal plating business. This

work usually involves repeated rinsing at each step of the process and can use very large quantities of water. He has substituted more efficient use and much re-use of water with the result that the process uses over 90% less water. Not only is this a highly desirable result for water conservation but cost savings mean greater profitability for his business. Mr. Burt has shared information about his water conserving processes and they are now being adopted by other similar businesses.

Finally, bringing the issue to our own gardens, Alane L. O'Rielly, organic gardener, advised that we first select plantings that need relatively little water. This can be achieved by using native plants. She gave many useful suggestions. For example, hand watering is the least efficient method of watering, involving waste through evaporation and failure to reach deep roots. Drip irrigation is best, providing a slow, steady input into the soil and minimal evaporation. She discourages having lawns as they are major water wasters, and encourages, instead, a variety of bushes, perhaps vegetables and even things we regard as weeds. A garden resembling a natural meadow is perhaps the most desirable.

After a lively round of questions and discussion, Steve Ritchie summarized and concluded the Town Hall and all adjourned to lunch.

## SSMC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

1. *Data-entry (we have a Mac)—2-3 hours per week*
2. *Publicity/Media—3-5 hours per month*
3. *City liaisons: Attend some council/planning meetings in his/her city and act as a communicator to the SSMC steering committee*
4. *Grant writing assistance—4-6 hours per month*
5. *Website updates—5 hours per month*

## MORE NEWS YOU CAN USE

### RecycleWorks.org

Got an old computer, refrigerator, small household appliance, hazardous waste, or other item you'd like to dispose of in a sustainable manner? Try the County of San Mateo's RecycleWorks information service at [www.RecycleWorks.org](http://www.RecycleWorks.org) or 1-888-442-2666. The site is loaded with info.

### Volunteermatch.org

Want to do some volunteer work? Check out [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org). You will find opportunities in a wide variety of fields. They range from Advocacy/Human Rights, Animals, Arts and Culture, Board Development, Children/Youth, Computers/Technology, Crisis Support, Disabled, Homeless/Housing, Environment, ETC.

# Working Towards a Sustainable San Carlos

By Debby Kramer

Quality of life. What does that phrase mean to you? Is it a place that epitomizes utopia? Does it evoke images of heaven on earth? How about lights on at night, and gas to heat your home? People in San Carlos grappled over that very topic to decide for themselves .

In 1999, a community process called the Quality of Life (QOL) was initiated to solicit community input. To guide the QOL process, a steering committee was established that consisted of a ten-member group of appointed residents, civic, and business leaders. Nearly 400 residents and business people participated in a set of community meetings and/or associated outreach activities. The purpose of these events was to develop community consensus on a new set of issues, policies, and projects to improve the QOL for the City of San Carlos. Outcomes included promoting environmental stewardship, re-establishing a San Carlos High School, improving communication between the city and its residents, and providing multiple and diverse cultural and recreational activities, such as a community pool.

Over the past year, two citizens in San Carlos have worked steadily with two city staff members to develop a list of actions based on the outcomes of the QOL process. In January, the city council of San Carlos approved the concept of sustainable practices and asked that the activities be incorporated into the coming fiscal year's budget and workplan. Thus was born the San Carlos Sustainable Community Program (SCP).

Using Sustainable San Mateo County's Indicators Report as a guide, Debby Kramer and Karen Hunt fashioned SCP into seven focus areas. Within each program area, multiple activities were identified, including establishing citywide bike

paths and walking corridors; increasing the alternative-fuel vehicle pool of the city; and adopting a construction and demolition waste ordinance and providing accompanying outreach related to the ordinance.

As the two neighbors sat at each other's homes trying to piece together the tidbits of information they had acquired, they received tremendous input and support from city staff, including City Manager Mike Garvey, Finance Director Richard Averett, and City Planner Lisa Costa Sanders.

Residents and other members of the San Carlos community are now becoming involved in this program. The three-pronged approach to implementation (recruiting volunteers, enlisting city departments, and partnering between the community and the city staff) is being established. Examples of this program coming to life are listed below.

- San Carlos ReLeaf is primarily tasked with helping to plant and maintain street trees in local neighborhoods. Additionally, this group participated in Magic's Fruition Program where children adopted and planted 30 fruit trees donated by Central Valley growers at their school or homes.

- Parks and Recreation Director Barry Weiss supported and emceed a Gear-up for Earth Day and Energy Conservation Fair at which 100 participants learned about energy conservation practices, received a 20 watt compact fluorescent light bulb, and heard about the open space and hiking trails available in San Carlos.

- San Carlos Senior Citizen Center, under direction of Donna Giampaoli-Dillard, is the location of a container garden. Teacher Heidi Umber's second-third grade class from Brittan

Acres School maintains the container garden. Included in the program are monthly classes ranging from composting to native plant gardens.

- Central Middle School Student Michele Soli leads a group of students who volunteer at the Senior Center Garden.

- Energy saving methods are being collected and disseminated to city personnel in a city/citizen partnership of information sharing.

- San Carlos on Wheels hosted the first Bike Parking Corral at Hometown Days to encourage people to ride their bikes to the event at Burton Park and to increase awareness of Bike to Work Week. Dozens of people took advantage of the free and convenient parking and free bike licensing.

- Central Middle School's Science Teacher Erin Walters implemented a Save-a-Watt campaign for Earth Day, whereby students learned to read electricity meters, monitored energy usage in their homes, and installed compact-fluorescent light bulbs to accomplish measurable energy savings. They presented their findings and a challenge to the community at Gear-up for Earth Day.

Together, this group of dedicated citizens has successfully partnered with its city representatives to design a sustainable community program and has begun to implement an action plan to improve the City of San Carlos' quality of life.

For more information, contact Karen Hunt at [kahunt@speakeasy.net](mailto:kahunt@speakeasy.net) or (650) 654-0900; or Debby Kramer at [DebbyK@geocities.com](mailto:DebbyK@geocities.com) or (650) 868-0637.

# The Citizen's Academy

by Kim Springer

I recently took part in the Citizen's Academy, a program offered free of charge by San Mateo County. County Supervisor Jerry Hill, who was formerly a San Mateo City council member, was instrumental in establishing the Academy, modeling it after a similar program in San Mateo/Burlingame/Foster City.

The Academy was held once a week, three hours each Tuesday night for twelve weeks, and it was indeed worth every minute. Some 30 people took part in the program which is offered twice a year. Those chosen to participate were of diverse backgrounds, from high school students to interested citizens, and even county employees or people associated with the county in some way. The goal of the Academy is to educate citizens and involve them in county affairs. We were encouraged to join a commission or program in the county upon our graduation.

Twelve weeks seems like a long time, but I soon understood why we needed this much time to cover the workings of San Mateo County. I was amazed at all the things that the county is responsible for, from providing support to families in need, housing for the homeless, medical care to the indigent, road upkeep in unincorporated areas, public defense for the accused, tracking, investing and handling of assessed taxes, control of the county jail, maintenance of county parks, support for animal services, drug treatment, support to nonprofit agencies supplying services, maintenance of county buildings, establishing a new outcome-based budgeting system, handling of elections, improving public transportation, and I could go on and on and on.

budget of approximately 1 billion dollars. If you want to learn about the incredible good for which it is put to use, know more about how that money is spent or how you might influence spending choices, or about taking part in a commission overseeing programs already in place, consider applying to the Citizen's Academy. Their mission is to "provide those who live or work in San Mateo County with an interactive learning experience about County services, programs and responsibilities."

If you would like more information about the Citizen's Academy, contact Mary McMillan at 650-363-4129 or Mario Rendon at 650-363-4460. If you would like to hear more about my experience, contact me, Kim Springer, at 650-572-7968.

The County of San Mateo has a

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Sustainable San Mateo County  
177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor  
San Mateo, CA 94402  
650-638-2323  
650-341-1395, fax  
Sustainable@Advocate.net  
http://Sustainable.Advocate.net  
Ruth Peterson, Chair  
Marcia Pagels, Founder  
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**Don't Miss The Energy Forum**  
 July 19 (see page 3)  
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