



# The Sustainable Advocate

*Dedicated to the long-term health and vitality of our region*

*SSMC is an activity of the Tides Center*

A Publication of Sustainable San Mateo County

September 2001



## Five Outstanding Recipients

This year's winners of SSMC's 2001 San Mateo County Sustainability Award were recently announced:

- Evelyn Taylor, former principal of North Shoreview School, co-founder of Turnbull Learning Academy, board member and former president of Samaritan House, and current director of Homework Central in San Mateo
- Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education
- Mid-Peninsula Boys and Girls Club
- Peninsula Habitat for Humanity
- Susan Sommers and Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve

Honorable Mention goes to Opportunities Industrialization Center West (OICW).

The award is given annually to individuals, groups, businesses, projects and organizations whose actions enhance the region's long-term social well-being and economic vitality, and support a healthy ecosystem. "Again, we were gratified by the broad diversity of the entries we received," said Ricki McGlashan, Awards Committee chair. "We were especially pleased with the number of nominees concerned with promoting social equity in our community, an aspect of sustainability that is often overlooked."

**Evelyn Taylor** is being honored for her abiding dedication to providing equal educational opportunities to young people. It is clear that the overall sustainability of any society depends on the education of its youth. As principal of North Shoreview School in San Mateo with a 70% minority enrollment and many disadvantaged children, and as co-founder of Turnbull Learning Academy, a school with a 95% minority population, Evelyn Taylor went the extra mile to give all her students the opportunity to succeed. She

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## Energy Forum A Great Success

*By: David Crabbe*

On July 19, Sustainable San Mateo County, the League of Women Voters, the Bay Area Council and Peninsula TV brought together a distinguished panel of experts for a two hour discussion about the California energy crisis. The forum, titled: "Where has all the Power Gone?", was videotaped then televised on Peninsula TV several times after the meeting. The panelists included David Freeman, Chief Energy Advisor to Governor Gray Davis; Lisa Poelle, Public Relations Manager for Calpine; Vincent Schwent, Senior Project Manager for the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District and an expert on solar and wind energy; Matt Freedman, attorney for the consumer interest group The Utilities Reform Network (TURN); and James Hendry, Strategic Planner for the California Public Utilities Commission. Joe Simitian, State Assemblyman, was also scheduled to speak but could not get away from Sacramento due to extended debate on the many energy bills under consideration in the Assembly. The panel was moderated by Mark Simon, columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, and Bob Marks, Director of Peninsula TV. The forum focused primarily on three questions: "What got us into this mess?", "Where are we now?", and "What needs to be done to resolve the crisis?" There was surprising consensus among all of the panelists in answer to all three questions.

First: "Where are we now?" There was general agreement that prices are coming down and blackouts have been less than expected, but we have along way to go. All panelists credited Governor Davis' efforts to encourage energy conservation and secure long-term contracts for breaking the cycle of price escalation, but there was concern that, due to the immediacy of the problem, many decisions by both the Governor and the Legislature were being made too hastily. As Matt Freedman put it, "If we don't make good decisions now, we'll be paying for them over the next decade." There was also consensus that conservation is essential, but conservation alone won't solve the problem

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**Sustainability Award, continued**

introduced the "Efficacy" program to train everyone on campus how to deal with the diversity of backgrounds among her students. She arranged for Stanford University to share its education expertise with her faculty, and she found unique ways to get minority parents interested in the education of their children.

Evelyn realized early on that her students could not learn if they were not properly fed, housed, and clothed, so she connected with Samaritan House and opened up her school's gymnasium as a site for the distribution of clothing and hot meals five nights a week. She further invited Samaritan House to sponsor the North Central College Institute, a highly structured after-school program geared to putting students on the fast track to college starting in the third grade.

Currently, Evelyn is director of Homework Central based in local San Mateo churches which tutors students in North Central San Mateo.

**Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education** wins the award for teaching about our county's unique local ecology, the global environment, and our relationship with, and impact on the Earth. Since 1954, more than a million visitors have learned the importance of protecting the environment through hands-on exhibits, live animals, and extensive gardens. The museum offers educational experiences for pre-school to college levels through tours, group programs, classes, and special exhibits, both at the museum and throughout the community. The museum is often the very first place where our county's children are exposed to the meaning and importance of sustainability.

**Mid-Peninsula Boys and Girls Club** is recognized for its efforts to help disadvantaged youth between the ages of six to eighteen realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens. The sustainability of any society ultimately rests with its

youth. Mid-Peninsula Boys and Girls Club provides an array of educational, recreational, and social activities both after-school and during school intersession hours. The Club plays the role of surrogate parent to many of its members. It provides homework assistance, helps develop self-esteem and confidence, and encourages participation in activities that promote positive growth. The Club operates facilities in San Mateo and Daly City which employ 16 youth professionals who are experienced in the areas of teaching, coaching, fitness training, life skills counseling, conflict resolution.

**Peninsula Habitat for Humanity** is being honored for its continuing efforts to build quality, affordable, ownership housing through volunteer efforts in long-term partnership with qualified families in San Mateo County. Shelter is a basic human need, thus a sustainable society makes sure that safe, affordable housing is available to all its citizens. Peninsula Habitat for Humanity brings the local community together to build houses for, and with, families with very low incomes. To date, Peninsula Habitat has built 44 single-family and condominium homes in San Mateo County and hopes to build 200 homes in the next five years. Individuals, congregations, organizations, cities, and corporations donate land, building materials, labor, and funds. Through teamwork, differences in culture, race, religion, and economic status become less important. The completed houses are sold to families who are expected to put in at least 500 hours of "sweat equity" working on their houses and the houses of others. By investing their own time and talents, family members build a deep pride of ownership, learn how their house is built and how to maintain it in the long run.

**Susan Sommers and the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve** win the award for establishing and maintaining one of the premier wildlife preserves on the Peninsula. Susan Sommers, recognizing that a sustainable community protects its precious natural

resources so that they can be enjoyed by future generations, has worked for 25 years to document and preserve the unique biological diversity of Edgewood Park and Nature Preserve in San Carlos. In the late sixties, Susan compiled an extensive list of the flora and discovered that several of Edgewood's plants were on a list of rare and endangered species prepared by the California Native Plant Society. Her plant list plus aerial photos she took gave the State Fish & Game officials documentation to confirm Edgewood's unique vegetation and diversity. In 1969, Susan became upset with the intrusion of off-road vehicles and motorcycles and asked state officials to bar their access. She also launched a campaign to educate others about Edgewood's unique ecology and history, so when the county proposed a golf course on the site, she had brought awareness to many groups. The battle to prevent development of the golf course continued for several years, but finally in 1993, Edgewood was designated a natural preserve, and Susan became involved in creating a Master Plan for resource management of the park.

When it became apparent that the county did not have sufficient funding and staff to maintain the preserve without volunteer help, a group of concerned citizens formed the non-profit Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve which is dedicated to protecting native habitat. For the past eight years, the Friends have run a docent program, habitat restoration program, community outreach, and a trail patrol program. They lead wildflower walks every weekend in the Spring, and work to control the spread of non-native species and protect the natural flora year round.

**Opportunities Industrialization Center West (OICW)** receives an Honorable Mention for its vocational training programs for minority and disadvantaged people. OICW contributes to sustainability by its emphasis on the social well-being and economic vitality of San Mateo County.

# Smart Growth Strategy / Regional Livability Footprint Project Workshop Announced for September 29

*What's this about?* A workshop to develop a land use scenario for San Mateo County will be held on September 29, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm at the San Mateo County Expo Center, County Fair Grounds, 2495 South Delaware, San Mateo. The workshop is co-sponsored by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development, and 15 other organizations within the county including Sustainable San Mateo County. It will focus on five areas: housing availability and affordability, mobility and traffic congestion, environmental quality, social and economic equity, and livability and community vitality. The goal is to achieve support among public officials, civic leaders and stakeholders for a preferred land use pattern that will inform how the Bay Area could grow

over the next 20 years.

*What will we do?* Imagine yourself leaning over a table with a half-dozen other folk looking at a map of the county cut into 100 planning pieces along lines suggested in each town's General Plan. You all have a menu of twenty different land use types and intensities (e.g. "low density residential"), each with pictures, descriptions, and examples. Now imagine you get to compose land use scenarios for the county by assigning a land use type to each planning area in a computer-supported process that updates resulting summary statistics for the whole county. Something like this will happen in all nine counties this fall, and will be refined in subsequent workshops the following spring.

*Who's behind this?* Two timely long-

range planning projects flow together into these workshops. Several years ago, our five regional governmental regulatory agencies (agencies for government, transportation, conservation, air quality, and water quality) noted they were each exploring smart growth strategies independently and launched a cooperative initiative. Separately, numerous regional organizations including the Sierra Club, Bay Area Council, Urban Habitat, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Association of Bay Area Governments, formed the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development, a regional consensus building project using the "three E's" theme—Environmental quality, Economic vitality, and social Equity. This series grows out of, and feeds into, both of these broad efforts and is presented locally in conjunction with San Mateo cities' and the county's "Moving from Talk to Action" plan.

*What About Local Control?* The entire process is advisory. The process and the underlying software model, once "road tested," will allow any city to simulate how their own local decisions affect the region and vice versa.

*Where is it going?* Time will tell. Never before has the Bay Area engaged in a process of reflection that is at once so broad (nine counties, over 100 participating groups and agencies, representatives of many sectors), so deep (from regional governments to individual neighborhood advocates), and so flexible (the ability to generate and refine multiple scenarios). Let's give it our best. For more information, visit the website: [www.abag.ca.gov/planning/smartgrowth/publicworkshops.html](http://www.abag.ca.gov/planning/smartgrowth/publicworkshops.html).

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**YES:**

I want to support the efforts of **Sustainable San Mateo County** by becoming a member.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Benefactor \$1,000

Sustainer \$500

Sponsor \$100

Regular \$35

Senior/Student \$15

Additional donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form with check made out to:

Tides Center/SSMC  
177 Bovet Road, Sixth Floor  
San Mateo, CA 94402

I want to contribute time as well as financial support:

Help with presentations

Help the Indicators Project

Work with the Business Task Force

Work with the Education Task Force

Help with the Sustainability Awards

Help promote sustainability through other actions or projects

Send me a copy of the 2001 Indicators Report

**All Contributions are tax deductible**

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**Renew Your  
Membership Now!**



## Energy Forum, continued

and we need to build more power production facilities in the near future.

The panelists further agreed that electricity is a unique commodity because it exists in a very volatile market place and you cannot easily stockpile it to ride out the volatility. Power generation must be in perfect sync with power demand or it's worthless. Too little power leads to blackouts. Too much power cannot be used. Freeman compared electricity with oxygen. "If you're in a hospital on the operating table and you need oxygen, you need it immediately and you are willing to pay any amount to get it because it's life or death. A pure free market is an abomination in electricity and here's why - you can't store it and you can't do without it."

Most panelists agreed that California's deregulated system was flawed and this had allowed some "gaming" of the system to occur and that gas suppliers and energy generators had taken advantage of California consumers. Lisa Poelle of Calpine disagreed and said that "the industry sees it primarily as a supply and demand issue."

So what got us into this mess? According to Vincent Schwent, "There was nothing wrong with the system back in the 1990s. The California Manufacturer's Association went to the legislature and said they would go elsewhere if deregulation was not passed because there was, at that time, a basic belief that the free market would bring down prices." Matt Freedman agreed. "Ideology was a big issue. Choice was the solution to everything. Natural gas looked cheap at the time and we believed that gas would be cheap and abundant forever." Everyone allowed deregulation to proceed. According to Schwent, "This was a steamroller. You've never seen a steamroller like this in Sacramento." Even TURN went along with deregulation legislation "in order to save some favorable elements in the

bill because they were sure it would pass with or without them," recounted Freedman. The utility companies also pushed for deregulation seeing it as a way to unload their older generating plants and set rates artificially high for an extended period of time to cover their transition costs. This seemed like a good business decision for them at the time because their real cost of electricity was in reality much lower than the rates they were allowed to charge. And for a while, the real cost of electricity remained relatively low and deregulation seemed to be working, but there was a downside. Because the price of electricity was low, power companies had no economic incentive to build new plants and they didn't build them. Then in 1999 and 2000, the price of natural gas skyrocketed, energy supplies were limited, and the cost to the utilities to purchase energy exceeded the rate caps. This led to a river of red ink which led to the current crisis with PG&E in bankruptcy and Southern California Edison hanging on by a thread.

What needs to be done now to get us out of this mess? David Freeman touted the Governor's plan to: 1) continue to strongly promote energy conservation; 2) increase the generation of renewable energy from the current 11% of the state's total up to 20% by 2010; 3) create a California Power Authority which would take control of the state's transmission lines and possibly run some power plants; 4) assure that any rate increases go first to the heaviest users; and 5) help PG&E and Southern California Edison get back into the energy buying business by selling state bonds to help cover some of their debts. He said that the ultimate solution will probably be a hybrid system: part regulated, part free market. The Power Authority was needed, he proclaimed, because "In the olden days, the utility was legally responsible for keeping the lights on. With deregulation, no one is responsible, except maybe Elvis. With the Power Authority, California will take on that responsibility and have the right

to build plants if they are needed. A complete free market for electricity is inherently unworkable," he said.

The other panelists generally agreed with the Governor's program, but there was much concern about a "bailout" of the utility companies at the expense of the California ratepayers. "These [bailout] bills are moving through the legislature at light speed with little understanding by the legislators of what they actually mean," said Freedman. There was also concern that large businesses are lobbying to be allowed once again to purchase electricity directly from suppliers. This would bypass the state and leave the state with no way to recoup the money it has spent to date to keep electricity flowing to these very same large customers.

There was agreement that the state should purchase and upgrade the transmission lines because the state can borrow money cheaper than private industry which will reduce the cost to upgrade the system over time, and California will also be able to control the ongoing maintenance of those lines. "Transmission lines are the highways of electricity," said Schwent. "We don't have private toll roads all over California although we may have private trucking companies using state highways. The state must make sure there is enough transmission capacity to carry the electricity." Freedman added, "If the state takes over the system, it can look out for what's best for all users of the system, not just the power supplier's economic bottom line."

A further point of agreement included the need for "distributed generation". This means locating new power plants close to the geographic areas they serve and close to existing transmission lines. "Distributed generation makes it easier for you to build small power plants, fuel cells, solar collectors, wind turbines - put them on your roof and basically become your own power plant," said

# Education Task Force

by Carol Kittermaster

The success of our "Sustainability Institute" has prompted SSMC's cooperation with other groups. We will be participating in the Bay Area Environmental Education Resource Fair (BAEER-FAIR), which is having its 25th annual event on Saturday, January 5, 2002, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. They will host 100 exhibitors and numerous workshops for public and private school instructors, home-based educators, administrators, parents, and students,

## Energy Forum, continued

Hendry. "Small wind, solar, geothermal cost less than other sources of power," he added. Plus distributed generation doesn't require major transmission lines.

We also need to replace many of our older power plants. According to Lisa Poelle of Calpine, "New gas-fired plants are 40% more efficient than older plants. This means your prices will be better than those of the older plants, thus older plants will be unable to compete." But Matt Freedman expressed concern about our over reliance on natural gas. "Natural gas markets are being manipulated the same as electrical generation," he said. "We shouldn't over rely on one fuel. We need to diversify our fuel sources and the way to do that is to rely on renewable resources." David Freeman interjected, "We have to mention air quality. The air is bad in much of California. There is not room in the sky for even a very, very clean gas-fired plant. We've got to go to renewable energy because we've got to have a bunch of zero polluting sources of electricity. Renewable resources are an imperative." Schwent added: "In the 1980s in California, we added 1000 megawatts of wind. It's the cheapest way of making electricity. Today, 10-11% of California's energy comes from renewables. The [Governor's] goal is 20% of our power by 2010. In the long

with a special focus on the environment. We will have an exhibit table to display resource materials, curriculum and information about SSMC's projects and events, and are planning an informative workshop with presenters from our "Sustainability Institute." The BAEER-FAIR draws participation from throughout the state, including the whole Bay Area. In the past, BAEER-FAIR has drawn 1,500 attendees.

In September, we will begin monthly planning sessions with the Council of Math/Science Educators of San Mateo

run, all our energy production must be sustainable." "Gas is an essential transition technology," said Schwent, "[but] renewables are an insurance policy for rate payers. Renewables provide us with a hedge against higher prices [because they are not dependent on market-driven fuel supplies]."

Mark Simon then asked, "Is it possible we are building too many new plants?" Freeman replied: "You can't solve a surplus and a shortage at the same time. We need to maintain at least a 15% cushion in power generation [to protect us from irregular demand and power plant down time]."

Finally, the moderator's asked: "Should we expect to see a rate decrease in the near future?" The panel agreed that consumers should not expect a decrease anytime soon. "It depends on gas prices and whether large industrial customers are going to be allowed to bailout," said Matt Freedman. David Freeman added: "[The federal government could help keep prices down] by making conservation the heart of the national energy policy and giving tax credits for energy efficient equipment." Hendley continued, "The federal government should promote energy efficiency and the FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] must set wholesale energy rates that are just and

County (CMSESMC) to determine SSMC's participation in their Spring Conference scheduled for March at Canada College. CMSESMC has sponsored this conference since 1974 for K-12 educators, introducing hands-on classroom activities. Over 50 exhibitors, ranging from textbook publishers to environmental education organizations, will be displaying or selling their materials.

Any one interested in joining our Education Task Force or participating in planning these events, please call me at (650) 341-1650.

reasonable . . . and the federal government should promote renewable energy," injected Freedman. David Freeman added, "If wind and solar power increases, it may cost more, but we need to be willing to pay a little more to support renewable power." Freedman also stated that "PG&E's parent company needs to give back some money to the people of California," but Freeman cautioned that it would be difficult to get money out of PG&E now that they're in bankruptcy. Freedman countered that perhaps the bankruptcy was an opportunity for the state to purchase some of PG&E's assets at reduced prices. As he put it, "We need to get fair value for any help we give the utilities—that's the difference between a buyout and a bailout."

The forum was covered by both Channel 2 and Channel 4 television and reported during their evening news broadcasts that night. The event was also written up in both the Chronicle and the San Mateo County Times. Videotapes are available of all two hours of the forum @ \$15. Call SSMC at (650) 638-2323 to order a videotape.

*Update: A few weeks after this forum took place, the governor named David Freeman to head up the newly establish California Power Authority which can issue up to \$5 billion in bonds to buy, lease or build power plants.*





## SSMC Chair Report

by Ruth Peterson

Here comes fall (too soon) with all of its attendant

activities. What I had hoped would be a long, relaxing summer went by much too quickly. We have been working diligently to prepare for a retreat which has been planned for September 22. Members of SSMC will be revisiting a number of issues including goals, programs and events, public image, board development and financial needs, both short-term and long-term. This is a springboard to envisioning the next step of growth for SSMC. We are hoping to achieve this in a short 3 hour session, and if any of you would like to join us in this decision-making process, please call us. You would be most welcome.

The Energy Forum was very successful and working with the League of Women Voters and Peninsula TV was an excellent experience. David Freeman, Governor Gray Davis' chief energy advisor, was quite the star of the panel. There was a lot of agreement among the panel

regarding the need for conservation and renewable sources of energy which both surprised and pleased us. Bob Marks, Director of Peninsula TV, has proposed that we continue to work together and do a limited number of community programs over the next year aligning ourselves with other groups as well, according to the subject matter. This forum committee will continue to function on an ad hoc basis. Tapes of the Energy Forum are available at \$15 each.

Our Third Annual Awards Program will culminate in a luncheon to be held at the Westin SFO Hotel on October 26. Once again, we have outstanding winners who are stellar examples of sustainability in action. PacBell has committed to be our Global Sponsor, Lyngso Garden Materials a Regional Sponsor, and we are very appreciative of their support. Invitations will go out soon, so be sure to reserve space early

for this "feel good" celebratory event. You will find more information on this event elsewhere in this newsletter.

We are always pleased to welcome volunteers in whatever capacity and also people who are interested in participating in our Education and Business Task Forces. Please call us and we will give you more information.

Carol Tanzi, aka Goddess of Garbage, called me this morning to remind me that Sustainable San Mateo County is approaching its 10<sup>th</sup> year. What a milestone! Carol is an active member of the Steering Committee and the Business Task Force and is planning a surprise fund raiser with Helen Fisicaro for some time next year. We are looking forward to hearing more about it.

I hope to see you soon, and, of course, hope that you are acting sustainably in everything you do!

## Business Task Force

by Kim Springer

The Business Task Force (BTF) is forging ahead, gathering ideas for new programs following the success of the Green Building forum, Saving Green--Building Green, held in late May.

As a group, the BTF is working well together, and our meetings are spirited, all sides of the issues being openly expressed, as we draw from the wide variety of experiences of our members. We have a retired architect, a quality and environmental management consultant, a media personality/recycling expert, the coordinator of the county's recycling program, an engineering supervisor, a retired human resources/counselor, just to name a few. If you would like to contribute to the enjoyable and real work we are doing, please find my contact information at the end of this article.

We will be taking part in the San Mateo County Business Expo 2001 on

Wednesday, October 3, 5--7:30 pm, at the San Mateo County Expo Center. At this event, we will be seeking suggestions from the business community to see where we can be of the greatest service, helping to educate businesses on new ways of minimizing their "environmental footprint." Come visit and let us know what your greatest concerns are on environmental, economic and social equity issues in business. We need your "input" to help form our "output."

Keep reading this section on the BTF in future editions of this newsletter to find out what our next forum topic will be for early next year.

If you have any specific questions about what we do, when or where we meet, or how you can take part, please contact me, Kim Springer, at 650.572.7968, or by email at ksprngr@ix.netcom.com.

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Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of SSMC, its members or funders.

# San Mateo County Sustainability Award 2001

## Presentation Luncheon

**J**oin us to honor members of our community who are contributing to our county's sustainability.

**Friday, October 26, 2001**

Westin Hotel, San Francisco Airport, 1 Bayshore Highway, Millbrae

11:30–Noon: welcome, no-host bar, raffle preview

Noon–1:30: lunch, program, presentation of awards and raffle drawing

*Featuring remarks by*

**Carol Misseldine • “Challenge and Complacency”**

Misseldine helps businesses, communities, governments and other organizations learn and apply sustainability principles. She was invited to the first "train the trainers" seminar on The Natural Step taught by founder Karl Henrik Robert in Sweden. She will highlight measures that now being taken and challenge us to do more.

**\$45/person before Oct. 15. (\$50 Oct. 15-22)**

**Call 650-638-2323 for more information, reservations or raffle tickets**



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