

Promoting the Golden Rule of environmental sustainability...  
Do unto future generations as you would have them do unto you.

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

# Green News

Virginia Beach City Public Schools  
Sustainable Schools Newsletter

WINTER 2008

## Happy Holidays

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, the average U.S. household produces 25% more waste than the rest of the year, roughly a million extra tons per week. This figure doesn't include the food that is thrown away or the Christmas trees that are placed in landfills. All is not lost; consider these options to reduce your environmental footprint this season.

**Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.** Most of us can easily reduce the amount of "stuff" we buy over the holidays, as well as reduce the number of automobile trips we take to the store. A little preplanning and consolidation never hurt anyone.

Try sending electronic cards this year instead of traditional cards, or you can purchase greeting cards made from recycled or tree-free materials.

**Reuse.** Use paper bags from the grocery store as wrapping paper and have the kids decorate them, or use the comics. Reuse old ribbon and bows. Be creative, it's even politically correct now for the diehard "cheapskates" to re-gift presents never used and give them to someone else this year (you know who you are.)

Finally, don't forget to **recycle**. Now is a good time to go through your closets, while making room for holiday guests, and donate those old

jackets and clothing to various charities. Don't be shy about using your neighbors' recycling bins for your overflow while they are out of town.

Remember, the actions that we take now will determine whether future generations will also have happy holidays.



*Celebrating the joys of recycling on the island of misfit toys*

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## Green Resources for Teachers

There is a lot of great information, pertaining to environmental sustainability, available to teachers. However, this information can be very time consuming to track down. One of the goals of this newsletter, and the Sustainable Schools Committee, is to take some of this burden off school personnel who are interested in environmental issues. One way this can be accomplished is by connecting interested parties that share a common

goal.

For example, **Gina Spencer** is a first grade teacher at **Pembroke Elementary** and the school's SSL. Gina is also the Virginia Beach contact for the NEED (National Energy Education Development) Project. She attended the 2007 NEED National Energy Conference this past summer where teachers were taught how to incorporate energy programs in their classroom and extracurricular activities. For more

information on how you can plan a successful energy unit that meets the Standards of Learning in your classroom, you can contact Gina or visit [www.need.org](http://www.need.org).

So, don't be shy. If you have questions about environmental issues or would like to know about available resources, please send an email to [greennews@vbschools.com](mailto:greennews@vbschools.com).

*Paraffin wax candles are made from petroleum and release the equivalent of diesel exhaust when burned. 100% beeswax or soy candles burn 90% cleaner, 50% longer, and are made from renewable resources.*

## CFL Basics (not the Canadian Football League)

Increasing your environmental awareness is easy. It's implementing environmental practices that can be a little difficult at times. Let's say, for example, that you decide to replace your typical incandescent household light bulb with a more energy efficient Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL). The first thing you do is look around to see what is available and how much it will cost. You'll soon notice that most stores do not carry a wide variety of CFLs to choose from. Next, you will notice that the prices vary drastically from store to store. Currently, in this area, Wal-Mart seems to be leading the pack.

Now, before you bite the bullet and buy some bulbs to take home, you need to be aware of a few things. The quality of light can vary drastically between bulbs. The least expensive "soft white" types usually provide a dim yellow light that turns many people away from CFLs. However, if you opt for the "daylight" bulbs, you may find the quality of light is much better.

Many CFLs also have a delay, which means it can take 10-60 seconds before the light reaches its full illumination. In other words, the light is dim when you first flip the switch and it can take up to 60 seconds before the light reaches its full brightness. As the technology gets better, there will be more brands on the market that do not have this warm-up time. At this time, it may be necessary to experiment a little before finding a bulb that satisfies your needs. Don't give up. The amount of energy you will save is worth the effort.

It is important to note that all fluorescent lights contain small amounts of mercury. Contrary to what some people would lead you to believe, this does not mean that regular incandescent lights are better for the environment. Approximately 95% of the energy consumed by an incandescent bulb is emitted as heat, the rest is given off as light. CFLs produce 70% less heat and most of their energy goes toward producing light. Therefore, a 23 watt CFL produces the same amount of light as a 100 watt incandescent and last ten times longer. Furthermore, even if every fluorescent bulb in the U.S. were smashed and the mercury escaped in to the atmosphere, it would not compare to the amount of mercury emitted into the atmosphere from coal-burning power plants. Coal-burning power plants account for approximately 40% of the total mercury emissions in the U.S.

Here is what the EPA recom-



mends, if you break a fluorescent bulb at home:

1. Open a window and leave the room for at least 15 minutes.
2. Remove all materials (i.e., the pieces of broken bulb) without using a vacuum cleaner. You do

not want any mercury in your vacuum cleaner. To remove materials follow these steps:

- Wear disposable rubber gloves, if available. (never touch the bulb pieces with your bare hands)

- Carefully scoop up the fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard (you do not want the residue to get on your broom or dust pan either.)

- Wipe the area clean with a damp paper towel or disposable wet wipe. Sticky tape, such as duct tape, can be used to pick up small pieces and powder.

3. Place all cleanup materials in a plastic bag and seal it. Do not place these in the regular garbage. (A list of drop off locations is included in this article).

4. Wash your hands after disposing of the bag.

5. The first time you vacuum the area where the bulb was broken, remove the vacuum bag after cleaning the area (or

empty and wipe the canister) and put the bag and/or vacuum debris, as well as the cleaning materials, in two sealed plastic bags in a protected area outdoors until ready for disposal.

The Southeastern Public

Service Authority (SPSA), will accept fluorescent bulbs or broken bulbs that have been contained in the manner described above. Take your sealed plastic bag to the following locations in Virginia Beach:

*Virginia Beach Landfill II*

*1991 Jake Sears Road*

*Open Monday-Saturday*

*8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.*

*Landstown Transfer Station*

*1825 Concert Drive*

*Open 2nd Saturday and last*

*Friday monthly 9:00 a.m. to*

*12:00 p.m.*

Understandably, there aren't too many people who are willing to drive across town to dispose of their CFLs whenever a bulb burns out. Ikea and some other large stores will allow you to return old CFLs to their store for recycling. However, at this time there are no businesses in this area that will accommodate this form of recycling. Individuals are currently working on a solution that will serve the community better in our area regarding the disposal of CFLs. Updated information on the progress of recycling CFLs will be made available in future issues of *Green News*.

In the meantime, don't give up. According to the Department of Energy, if every American home replaced just one light bulb with a CFL, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

## Increase Awareness: Our Impact on the Environment

Most people are totally unaware of the consequences of their daily actions upon the environment. When people hear that using a gas-powered leaf blower for 30 minutes contributes as much to global warming as driving a light-duty truck back and forth between New York and Denver, twice. They are usually incredulous and give a similar answer. "I had no idea that leaf blowers were bad for the environment; at least, not to any significant degree." It seems the general consensus is that we all know we are doing things that are bad for the environment. We just don't think that what we

are doing has a significant impact. No one is suggesting that we stop bathing and only wear clothes that we make out of native grasses. The suggestion is that we all think about how we interact with our natural environment. The reason this issue should be important to everyone is because we have become so far out of sync with our natural environment that it can no longer compensate for our environmental abuses. Being unaware is no longer an acceptable excuse. All of our actions have consequences. From those big green, perfectly-manicured lawns we

keep, to all of those fuel-consuming tools and toys we love to collect. The old motto, "He who dies with the most toys wins" should be replaced with, "Less is more."

Think about our existence on this planet as analogous to two people living on an island. We'll call them Mother Nature and Mankind. This island has everything needed to survive if used in moderation. The only problem is, while Mother Nature consumes the resources available to her at a rate that can be sustained by nature, Mankind is living large. Instead of

building fires sufficient to cook his food and keep warm, Mankind is dancing around a huge bonfire each night and cooking enough food for ten mankinds. Eventually Mother Nature realizes that her quality of life is drastically diminishing and will eventually cease. Mother Nature has two options: club Mankind over the head and put a stop to the destruction of the island, or explain the situation to him and hope he will change his ways.

Let's not sit around and wait for Mother Nature to club Mankind over the head.



### A Closer Look: How VBCPS is Addressing Sustainability

This past October a PDP course was offered for Sustainable School Liaisons and focused on how VBCPS is addressing environmental sustainability. A total of 40 people attended the classes, and their efforts towards promoting environmental sustainability have the school division headed in the right direction. Here is a sampling of some of the environmental programs that are taking place throughout our school division.

**Cell phone recycling:** Many schools are using the GRC recycling program to help the community dispose of old cell phones and raise money at the same time. **Caron Camaione-Williams**, a second grade teacher and SSL at **Princess Anne Elementary**, was one of the first to use this program and she says it works great. If you would like to start a similar program at your school, please contact

your SSL for information. At the end of this school year, a list will be compiled of all of the schools that participated in cell phone recycling and how much money they earned. Don't be left out.

**Teaching gardens:** Many of the participants in the PDP course had questions about teaching gardens. Teaching gardens provide a unique opportunity to connect students to the environment in a personal and direct manner. **W.T.Cooke Elementary** is a good example of how a school with a very limited amount of space can provide an outdoor teaching garden. For information about W.T. Cooke's garden club, named "Ready, Set, Grow", you can contact **Julie Laidlaw**.

**Energy Patrols** are also a great way to monitor green activities at your school while increasing student and staff environmental awareness.

**Green Run Elementary's** "Green Team" checks to make sure materials are being recycled properly, as well as ensuring that lights are off and doors are closed when rooms are not in use. At the end of each month, the class with the least amount of "Oooops!" notes gets a surprise.

There are many elaborate energy patrol programs out there on the Internet. For a concise and easy way to start a program at your school visit [www.energyquest.ca.gov/teachers\\_resources/index.html](http://www.energyquest.ca.gov/teachers_resources/index.html).

In addition to the three programs noted above, many schools are finding innovative ways to increase environmental awareness. These programs range from **Alanton Elementary's** "Eco-Art" project, to **Salem High School's** green group, *Envive*. In Eco-Art, first-grade students learn about recycling while creating art from old

newspaper clippings and colored paper scraps. Meanwhile, *Envive* members are currently working on organic fertilizer options for the football field as well as storm drain labeling.

Share your school's projects to promote environmental sustainability by emailing [greennews@vbschools.com](mailto:greennews@vbschools.com).



*Eco-Art will be on display at the Great Neck Rec. Center from April 7-25*



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## Check This Out

### Web sites:

[http://www.energyquest.ca.gov/teachers\\_resources/index.html](http://www.energyquest.ca.gov/teachers_resources/index.html)

Go to this site to download a pdf on how to start an energy patrol program.

[www.grcrecycling.com/programs/cell-phone-collections/index.cfm](http://www.grcrecycling.com/programs/cell-phone-collections/index.cfm)

Everything you need to start a cell phone recycling program at your school is here.

[www.lifelab.org](http://www.lifelab.org)

A good site for outdoor teaching garden information.

### Publications:

*The Lorax:*  
by Dr. Seuss

*The Green Book– The Everyday Guide to saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time.*

by Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen

### Other:

*An Inconvenient Truth.*  
Directed by Davis Guggenheim  
In case you've been living in a cave it is a documentary on Global Warming.

*Who killed the Electric car*  
Directed by Chris Paine

*A Crude Awakening–The Oil Crash*  
Directed by Basil Gelpke, Ray McCormack. 2006

## SSL Additions

Since we established the list of Sustainable School Liaisons in the last issue of *Green News*, we have added some new names and made some corrections. Please note the following changes. A complete list of SSL's will be available on [www.vbschools.com](http://www.vbschools.com).

- Adult Learning Center (Paul Palombo)
- Center for Effective Learning (John Parkman)
- Centerville Elementary (Julie G. Hayden)
- Corporate Landing Elementary (David French)
- Corporate Landing Middle (Elizabeth Phippen-LePine/ Brian Egan)
- Glenwood Elementary (Amy Doss)
- Independence Middle (Dan Bugarin)
- Open Campus (Tanya Fowler)
- Tallwood Elementary (Rose Thomas)
- White Oaks Elementary (Pamela Leland)
- Windsor Oaks Elementary (Irene Scalfani)
- Woodstock Elementary (Sandy Whitney)

By 2025, the world must increase its water supply by 22% in order to meet its needs. Meanwhile, 40% of the drinking water supplied to homes is flushed down the toilet.



Lean and Green



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