



Novato Live Well Network

Nurturing the Body, Sustaining the Community

From the garden to the table and in between! Serving schools, families, & the community.

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Educational Waste Audits To Begin In Novato Schools: To Save The Environment And To Save The District Money

Novato, CA -- Novato Live Well Network (NLWN) is excited to announce that after many months of planning, they are rolling out the **School Waste Audit** project in collaboration with **Marin Conservation Corps (MCC)** and the **Novato Unified School District (NUSD)**. On **February 28, 2008 at 1:30 PM, Lu Sutton Elementary** (1800 Center Road, Novato) will be the first of several schools to participate in MCC's School Waste Audit program. *"As part of our 'Caught Being Green' environmental program, the waste audit will help conservation 'come alive' for our students!"* said **Suzanne Thompson**, Principal at Lu Sutton. Thompson added, *"We hope to empower our students to take action when there is a problem, and to understand that their collaborative efforts with our community can have significant impact beyond right here, right now."* The Waste Audit event involves the school staff, teachers and students. A date is picked and all garbage for that day is collected, sorted, weighed and documented. This will provide a benchmark for schools and departments to improve on.

With the recent announcement of Novato Sanitary District requiring the NUSD to start paying for their waste disposal beginning this summer, there is a potential annual cost of \$153,000 if kept at the same level of service. Add the recent state budget cuts, **Mark Silva**, Director of Maintenance Operation and Transportation at NUSD said, *"the time is critical for all schools and district departments to seriously look at ways they can work towards reducing waste."*

School lunch time is a big producer of waste: The students' lunch bags from home often include food and drinks wrapped in plastic or non-reusable containers. Until this year, the school lunch program also served food in paper or plastic. Beginning September 2007, **Miguel Villarreal**, Director of NUSD Food and Nutritional Services Programs began purchasing more costly compostable serving dishes to address the environmental concerns around plastics. But, compostable containers still need to be taken to the

dump. Villarreal's long-term goals are, *"to be able to upgrade the school kitchen facilities to wash reusable dishes. Right now there are no workable dishwashers at any of the school sites. So, disposable dishes and utensils are our only option."* At the recent NLWN "Rethinking Plastics" forum, Villarreal shared with the audience his dream of having school children bring from home utensils, cloth napkins, and reusable drinking containers in a reusable lunch bag to use when eating their school lunch. Doing so would annually eliminate 600 boxes each holding 1000 small cellophane packages containing a plastic spork, straw and paper napkin. Annual cost: \$7,800 for 600,000 of these spork packages. And, this does not include the cost for other disposable utensils, food containers and serving trays, nor the volume of annual waste.

Huriyyah Godfrey, Recycling Education Supervisor for MCC will be overseeing the waste audits. *"We are pleased to provide our waste audit program to the NUSD. This will be an opportunity to teach the students, staff, and parents about sustainability principles and how to manage our waste. We look forward to working collaboratively in finding ways to reduce and reuse,"* said Godfrey.

A Leadership Novato team called the "Green Team" will also assist in this process as their team project. *"We want to learn how to do an effective waste audit and help to bring this process to schools and the district office. We will work with the district office to implement a recycling plan. Many community groups use the NUSD facilities, including the City of Novato. We can't expect the children to do this alone. We are glad that Superintendent, Jan La-Torre Derby and her staff are supporting this effort,"* said **Berta Campos-Anicetti** from the Leadership team.

Taking the next step, NLWN will coordinate composting workshops in the spring. For more information, please contact Veronica Valero, School Waste Audit Coordinator, Novato Live Well Network, 415-897-2302, v4valero@comcast.net, www.NovatoLiveWell.org.

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