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Students for Sustainability offers opportunities



By Jacob Paradise December 1, 2011 10:55 am

I joined “Students for Sustainability,” a student-run environmental club on the Santa Rosa Junior College campus, in 2009. The club was headed by freshman students Jessica Jones and Cameron Williams. As an Environmental Studies major, I was excited to be involved with what seemed to be the only environmentally focused group on campus. The club started small with only six or seven core members who became known as the “Green Squad.” The Green Squad helped organize beach clean-ups, campus clean-ups, and opened dialogue with faculty about creating more efficient recycling and waste reduction programs on campus.

In 2009, the installation of the Bertolini Student Service Center presented the club with an opportunity to become involved with an exciting campus event. The three-story, 78,000 square-foot service center was built from recycled steel and relies on a geothermal H-VAC system, which uses pipelines that transfer heat from underground to the building, helping to moderate temperature.

Connected to Bertolini’s Student Center is the new cafeteria where our club created a primarily self-supported waste education and reduction program. Working with faculty, we created a three-bin system for compostable materials, recyclables, and landfill. Visual aids were designed to help students determine which bin their waste should go. Members of the Green Squad rotated through half-hour to hour-long shifts in the cafeteria, making ourselves available to answer any questions students might have about where certain waste items go.

In 2010, this program received recognition from California’s Higher Education Sustainability Conference in Los Angeles. Founders Jessica Jones and Cameron Williams were flown out to Los Angeles where they were presented with the 2010 Best Practice Award.

In October of this year, we partnered with the Leadership Institute for Ecology & the Economy, an organization that educates leaders to create public policy that is socially equitable, environmentally friendly, and economically viable for a sustainable community. The focus was education and bridging the gap between students and faculty to create programs and class activities, which would get students involved with their local community and with each other.

Students for Sustainability presently has multiple projects underway, one being our Fair Trade Coffee Campaign. We are currently conducting collaborative talks with the Thanksgiving Coffee Company, an artisan coffee roaster in Fort Bragg, Calif. This company buys coffee beans only from small farms and cooperatives whose employees receive fair treatment and pay. Taste-

testing stations will be set up around campus next semester, along with information about the company, giving students an opportunity to decide for themselves if Thanksgiving Coffee has what it takes to replace the Peet's coffee, which currently rules the campus.

Most recently our group has paired up with the Climate Protection Campaign, an organization working to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed program will be called the "Real Time Ride Share Program." This program is designed to make carpooling more accessible for those without personal transportation, or for those who simply wish to drive less. Individuals can download this smart phone application for free and by filling out a survey regarding scheduling, destinations and starting points, will be put into a categorized system which will pair the individual with other participants with similar schedules.

The Real Time Ride Share Program will save participants money while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and help to rebuild and expand local communities through increased social activity.

To learn more about Students for Sustainable Communities or to get involved with one of our current projects, you can go to our Facebook page. Here you can sign up to become a member, which simply means you will be contacted via email with updates and opportunities for volunteer involvement. The strength of our county lies within its diverse communities, and the strength of those communities lie with its members, its families, and with you.

Jacob Paradise left his job in the wine industry at the age of 28 to study for an Environmental Studies degree. He is presently an intern with Cotati Creek Critters, helping with creek restoration and community outreach.