



Cosumnes River College's

# GREEN SCENE

A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College

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## CRC looks forward to its First Campus Sustainability Day

by Andrea Salmi



Campus Sustainability Day will be celebrated on

Wednesday, October 24 this year. This day, established in 2003, has been set aside as a day to celebrate and reflect on the sustainability successes on college campuses across the United States. (You can find more information at <http://heasc.aashe.org/campus-sustainability-day>.)

We can enjoy what we have accomplished so far, learn what other colleges have done, and work together to move our campus forward. Please attend one of the events October 23-25 to see what has been happening here at CRC.

**Tuesday, Oct. 23, 3:30-5:00pm, SCI 106**—Prof. Stephen Coughran will host the film *Plastic Planet*.

**Wednesday Oct. 24, 12:30pm**—Prof. John Ellis will lead a walk around the new Winn

Center building (RSVP to [ellisj@crc.losrios.edu](mailto:ellisj@crc.losrios.edu)). Meet at the steps on the east side of campus.

**Wednesday Oct. 24, 1:30-3:30pm**—Students from Prof. Debra Sharkey's Geography 302, Environmental Studies and Sustainability class will conduct a trash audit outside the cafeteria.

**Thursday, Oct. 25, 3:30-5:00pm, SCI 106**—Students for a Sustainable Future will host the film *End of the Line*.

## The Winn Center begins to teach by John Ellis

The Winn Center for Construction and Architecture, the gateway to CRC's east entrance and the newest addition to the campus environment, is well underway. The structural system, erected in six days, is a steel-braced frame system where the diagonal members, on each face of the building, provide resistance to the lateral forces of wind and earthquake.

Maybe you saw the ever-green tree and flag raised on the ultimate beam. That is part of the 'topping out' ceremony, signaling various things—but often good fortune or patriotism.

In most buildings, the structure ends up being covered up, but in the Winn Center much of the structure will be left exposed so that the LEED Platinum building can be a

'living laboratory' to teach students about construction and green architecture. The design team will offer future generations an opportunity to understand how the building works—as well as gain LEED points for innovation.

To celebrate Campus Sustainability Day, October 24<sup>th</sup>, join me for a walking tour around the Winn Center. (See above event.)

## CDC paves the way for campus on composting



***“That was hard work. We talked to a million billion people. I’m glad we did it because a lot of people want to know more about composting.”***

*The last issue of the Green Scene featured photos of the CDC children sharing their composting project. Lora Wardlaw, a CDC teacher, shares the story behind the photos:*

Bryan Rodriguez and Haseeb Rahimi (left photo), two of the ten or so children who participated in the CDC’s Earth Day event, are surveying students and faculty on Earth Day, asking them if they are aware of CRC’s composting efforts. If the answer was no—as it was for most people—the boys explained the campus composting program, describing the food waste containers and sharing their location in the cafeteria, and then shared all they had learned over the preceding months.

All the school-age

children participated in the CDC’s compost program, which, with the help of Atlas disposal and CDC staff, diverted 471 pounds of food waste from local landfills. The children collected the CDC’s food waste, weighed and documented their collections, wrote stories about what the world might be like without efforts like composting, took pictures of the community garden here on campus, wrote songs, mailed letters to two musicians who have written songs about the importance of change and doing our part to help the earth, and made 800 book marks that they passed out during the Earth Day event (see *Green Scene* Issue 19).

To provide the children with a deeper understanding of what it was they were doing and to

show them the full cycle, I got samples from Northern Recyclers of the actual compost produced from CRC food waste. The children then put the compost back into their gardens and did some more planting.

The children also learned that our campus contributions produce compost that is then used on farms within a 50-mile radius of where it is produced in Zamora, California (near Woodland).

After the Earth Day event was over, Ezekiel (age 5) told me, "That was hard work. We talked to a million billion people. I’m glad we did it because a lot of people want to know more about composting. They want to show their kids all the stuff we did. All we have to do is teach them."

## Worm Report and Chicken Scratch



*Sandra Carter updates us on her worms and shares her latest urban gardening venture.*

The worms are doing nicely in the backyard. They have two charges: one group has been deployed to the back raised beds of tomatoes and the other is working in the Worm Condo, turning all my kitchen scraps into nutrient-rich soil and

castings.

In the spring, I had partitioned off two tomato areas, one with worms, one without. Now, in the fall, I am convinced that the raised bed *with* the worms produced more fruit and fuller plants than the one *without*.

In the condo, the worms do their work silently –

the true heavy-lifters of the back yard. Whenever I open the top of the condo door and look in, I see a few no-account worms escaping downward into their workstations; I guess they’re trying to appear hardworking. Down below though, in the bellows of the condo, all the other worms are busy devouring green kitchen

*continued on page 3*

## Worm Report Continued...

scraps, coffee grounds, broccoli stalks and olive pits.

It is quite amazing, really: I carelessly toss kitchen scraps on top of the heap in the worm condo and just days later the refuse has been transformed. And in a week, the scraps will be gone entirely. Wow! I'll probably transfer the castings into our garden soon.

Besides the worms, I've been planning for the arrival of chickens and a chicken coop. My chicken-loving friends have encouraged me in this venture; however, I didn't need much prompting because I come from the 'back to nature' crowd of the 1960-70s, used to manage health food stores

in Oakland and Berkeley, and even had my own carrot and wheat grass juice and tofu burger business. So to me, 'growing your own' and 'natural food' have always been the desired ideal.

However, up until recently, it was illegal to have chickens in Sacramento. Fortunately, a recent ruling, the Sacramento Chicken Ordinance, now allows up to three hens in a city backyard, at a 30-foot distance from neighbors. (Of course, the law prohibits roosters and the slaughtering of the birds.)

And so I happily ordered a small, portable chicken coop with a roosting area and a small moveable,

screened grazing area. It will arrive soon, which means that I must clean out the garage to create a space for the coop if the weather turns severe this winter. Once the coop arrives, I'll do my search for the three perfect egg-laying hens.

*Next time: finding my chickens and moving them into their new residence.*



***“Once the coop arrives, I’ll do my search for the three perfect egg-laying hens.”***

## Green Sleuth checks out what’s behind CRC’s new cafeteria waste system

**Were you confused what bin to put your waste in at the August Convocation luncheon? If so, you’re not alone. Help is on the way!**

Students in Prof. Debra Sharkey’s Geog302 (Env’l Studies & Sustainability) class will begin conducting trash audits around campus in October and November as part of a

class project designed to assess how well the CRC community is doing at diverting waste from landfills—and to raise awareness about recycling and composting. As preparation, in September, Prof. Sharkey’s students participated in a demonstration waste audit on campus led by Michelle La, UC Davis Program Coordinator of Waste Recycling and Reduction Program.



## Green Hawks: CRC student and professor team up to launch new eco-volunteer program

Would you like to know how to volunteer to do something good for the environment at CRC and in the surrounding community? If so, look no further than the new Facebook page, 'Green Hawks,' created by Prof. Debra Sharkey and CRC student Randi (Peterson) Pratt, as a way to rally the energy of like-minded people on campus to better the environment. Randi first became interested in the idea after participating in a 'Go Green' project in Prof. Colette Harris-Mathews' communications class last spring. Prof. Sharkey served as an advisor to Randi's group project, and together they decided to launch an eco-volunteer corps. Visitors

to the Green Hawks Facebook page can scroll through upcoming

device as the event date approaches as well as notice if an event is



volunteer opportunities and sign up at the click of a button. Enrolled volunteers receive a reminder on their mobile

cancelled. You can visit the Green Hawks site on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CRCGreenHawks>.

## CRC students and faculty attend the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference at UC Davis in June 2012.

Thanks to a mini-grant from the CRC Foundation, three CRC students [Nicholas Fox, Randi (Peterson) Pratt, and Veronica Vogan] received funding to attend the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference at UC Davis last June. Also in attendance at the conference were CRC professors Stephen Coughran and Debra Sharkey and classified

staff member (and former CRC student) Donna Leiva. In addition, President Deborah Travis attended the Awards Banquet where Prof. Sharkey was presented with a 2012 Board of Governor's Energy and Sustainability Honorable Mention award for faculty/student initiatives, leading to CRC's cafeteria composting project.



## Meet CRC's Student Sustainability Club Members



*Randi (Peterson) Pratt helps clean up during Creek Week.*

*Editor's note: In this continuing series, we feature a student from CRC's Students for a Sustainable Future club.*

It took Randi (Peterson) Pratt three years to figure out her major, but no sooner had she done so, than she moved 3,000 miles from home, leaving her exciting education in geography behind. There would be no more snow-shoeing in Yosemite, backpacking the Anza Borrego Desert, or conferencing in Chico: the nearby college in her new Georgia town did not offer geography as a major.

Then Randi decided to start a family. The sleepless nights plus the cultural influence put her love for Earth on the backburner. Deep down inside, she knew something was missing, but it wasn't until she moved back to California last year and returned to school that she realized what that something was—geography!

Getting back into the rhythm took no time at

all. She joined the Students for a Sustainable Future club, did a trash audit in the quad last Earth Day, volunteered during Creek Week, attended the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference in Davis over the summer, as well as worked on some other fun small projects.

She is happy to be able to recycle once more and is currently starting a compost pile in her backyard. At home, her two-year old already knows five continents and that litter is bad: "Icky trash! Pick it up Mommy!" Like her daughter, Randi's affinity for Earth began at a young age, reciting states before she was four. One day she hopes to travel the world with her daughter.

Currently Randi is enrolled in two geography courses, one required, the other the hard-to-resist Geog302, Environmental Studies & Sustainability. Sustainability fascinates her. Her goal is to transfer to Sac State next fall and to go on to get her

Master's degree from UC Davis—and eventually become a college professor. However, she has some more immediate, pre-transfer goals.

She is currently working on an article for publication (she hopes) in this year's *Globus Mundi*, a student journal here at CRC. The article will discuss e-waste challenges on a global scale. She will also be assisting in some more waste audits on and off campus.

One of her main goals before leaving CRC is to start an eco-volunteer program, something already underway (see 'Green Hawks' article). Encouraging faculty and students to make a difference on and off campus is a challenge she is up for!

## A student's view of the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference by Randi (Peterson) Pratt

As last spring semester came to a close, Professor Sharkey asked if I would like to join her and some fellow students for the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference at UC Davis. The instant I heard the word 'sustainability' I was sold!

I must be honest, however; I did not truly know what I was getting myself into until I arrived at UC Davis, checked in, looked over the schedule, and finally sat down for my first session, "From Field to Fork." Originally, I had pictured the conference as being some Greenpeace bigwigs discussing the Earth's wrongdoings. I could not have been more wrong.

After I had munched on some delicious, sustainably grown, veggie pizza and listened to a panel of students discussing their efforts to make cafeterias greener, we broke into groups to discuss some ideas of our own. "Wait! They want my ideas and feedback?" I thought to myself. In that moment, I realized that this conference was about

more than learning staggering statistics on mankind's large eco-footprint. Its purpose was to figure out the next steps to making our planet tick a little longer.

It was a sea of idea-exchanging all week. In one meeting, students from Santa Barbara shared their secrets on getting plastic bags banned from the campus bookstore. I moseyed through a business expo to discover a plethora of sustainable items, including biodegradable cutlery and eco-friendly household cleaners. With the wind in our hair, Professor Sharkey, fellow student Nick Fox, and I peddled our way across the UC Davis campus, learning how a student-driven force diverts compostable materials from methane-producing landfills.

Drive for change was in the air everywhere I went. The strides students, teachers, and faculty had made throughout the year did not go unnoticed. But the highlight of my week was when Professor

Sharkey received a statewide award on behalf of CRC's composting efforts. To top it off, CRC President, Dr. Debbie Travis, was able to join us. She even asked if she could borrow the glass award plate to show off at an upcoming meeting. It was a proud moment.

My experience at the California Higher Education Sustainability Conference this past June was much more than I could have imagined. It was fun, informative, and uplifting. To see so many people coming together to explore a sustainable future for our world was beyond my wildest dreams.



Randi (Peterson) Pratt, Debra Sharkey, and Nick Fox ready to participate in the bicycle tour to learn about UC Davis' composting operations at the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference.

**Cosumnes River  
College**

**Sustainability  
Committee**

**Members:**

Tamyra Carmona

Jon Cornelison

Steven Coughran

Julie Elliott

John Ellis

Cindy Erickson

Cath Hooper

Donna Leiva

Julie Oliver

Torence Powell

Andrea Salmi (Chair)

Susan Scott

Debra Sharkey

Thomasina Turner

Linn Violett

**Newsletter:**

Cindy Erickson

Cath Hooper

**Kudos**

...to the Los Rios Community College District Police Department for partnering with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in the Fifth National Take Back Rx Initiative in September. Faculty, staff, and the community were invited to drop off at campus police departments any unused, unwanted, or expired medications for safe and non-hazardous disposal, thereby helping to keep toxins out of the local water system.

...to Professor Debra Sharkey who won the Chancellor's Office statewide instructional leadership award for her efforts in sustainability. The award was presented at the Green Community College Summit in Pasadena.



...to UC Davis for receiving this year's Sierra Club award for 'Coolest School' in the nation, recognizing its many sustainability achievements..

...to Cory Wathen for purchasing the new 3-bin (recycle, compost, landfill) refuse containers for the cafeteria over the summer and for repurposing the cafeteria's older two-bin containers (recycle, trash) to the LRC and Technology buildings.

...to the Professional Development committee and Prof. Cynthia Torres for planning CRC's second attempted zero-waste Convocation luncheon in August 2012.

...to President Deborah Travis for attending the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference's Awards Banquet at UC Davis in June.

...to the CRC Foundation for funding three students to attend the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference at UC Davis in June.

...to former CRC student and current classified staff member, Donna Leiva, for her unwavering dedication to collecting CRV containers from campus refuse bins. To date, Donna has single-handedly managed the 'CRV for CRC' project she founded a year ago after attending the CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference at CSU Long Beach. Thanks to her efforts, there is nearly \$300 in a 'CRV for CRC' fund for future green projects at CRC.

