

2013/14 Conservation Champions at Seattle Public Schools



We asked schools to nominate a person or group that was working to foster a culture of conservation at their school. We received many wonderful nominations from schools throughout the District and are excited to share those nominations with you here. We hope you will find them as inspiring as we did!

Conservation Champion Awards are part of a suite of three Utility Conservation Programs: Shared Savings Awards, Green Team Support, and Conservation Champion Awards. Together, these programs aim to encourage and support the work that schools are doing to conserve energy, water, and waste. Conserving energy and water, and reducing solid waste ensures a brighter future for our students. It also results in financial savings that enable a greater investment in our core mission of excellence in education.

More information can be found online at <http://bit.ly/sps-conservation>

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APP@Lincoln, Anna Birinyi

"Anna has been committed to our school's Green Team since its inception, but this year she has taken on additional responsibilities, including organizing a biweekly Green Club. With her Green Club students, she is leading our school through the WAGS waste certification process – something which we have been hoping to achieve for 3 years now! Anna is also helping identify ways to transfer ownership of sustainability measures to teachers and students, ensuring that Green Team will thrive despite changes in parental involvement. For example, our school is now offering composting in every classroom because she has organized a team of fifth graders to collect it each afternoon. This has been very popular with the teachers who no longer have smelly buckets, and with the students who are proud of their work to reduce what is going to the landfill."

Nominated by Kimberly Christensen

APP@Lincoln, Sarah Sanford (parent) & Katie Hippe (student)

"Sarah, who is already spearheading a waste reduction effort at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, approached our Green Team about starting TerraCycling at our school, which would allow us to collect items that would otherwise go to the landfill. She helped set up a collection center that is used by teachers, students and families for hard to recycle items like writing utensils and energy bar wrappers. Additionally, she helped us start collecting juice pouches in the lunchroom – which is where Katie comes in! Katie is a fifth grader who has volunteered every Tuesday this year to "process" the juice pouches. She squeezes out any remaining juice and neatly stacks the juice pouches into a box so that Sarah can mail them to Terracycle. Katie volunteers with enthusiasm and purpose, and does her job cheerfully even on the days when the pouches are stinky and filled with fruit flies!"

Nominated by Kimberly Christensen

Ballard High School, The Ballard Swedish Hospital Transition Students



"Students participating in vocational training in the Ballard Swedish Hospital Transition Program are responsible for collecting the recycle materials throughout the entire hospital campus each day. Thanks to the efforts of these students, the Swedish Ballard campus is number one in the Swedish system for recycling which puts Swedish as a system in the top 5% in the city for recycling. At 59%, the Ballard Swedish campus has one of the highest recycle rates in the country. In 2013, Ballard recycled

517,063 lbs. of waste products in all the streams. The transition students also recycle all of the batteries used in the facility each day."

*Nominated by Cecile Kerkof - Special Education Teacher
& John Boyd - Instructional Assistant*



B.F. Day Elementary, Carrie Bauer

"Ms. Bauer has built a rain garden in front of the school building that slows sinks and spreads rain water before it can catch pollutants and take them out to the ship canal. It has become a quiet space for students who need time to regroup and a place for teachers to educate students about the importance of taking care of our environment. Ms. Bauer has also created a compost program in the cafeteria for food scraps to educate the children in understanding the difference between what we are recycling and composting in our environment. Finally Ms. Bauer has educated the staff to step up their recycling in the classroom and to make sure the students are taught to put their throwaways in the proper container."

Nominated by Lydell Carlson

Catharine Blaine K-8, Ted Gray & John Rundall

"Ted was instrumental in securing a grant for funding the installation of photovoltaic panels at Blaine. He is a strong proponent of alternative energy and believes that education is the foundation for changing to sustainable and clean alternatives to fossil fuels."

Nominated by John Rundall

"John has worked tirelessly on a project to install solar panels on the school. He has worked on the logistics of the project as well as with the school district to receive approval. The project is still in the works and has not yet been approved."

Nominated by Karen Kubota

Catharine Blaine K-8, Randy Self, Karen Kubota, Kimberlee Farvour, Ben Eckhart, Stephanie Peterson, Susanne Fischer, and Yumiko Ordal

"Composting and recycling started in the Blaine Cafeteria in the fall of 2009. Prior to 2009 everything was thrown into the garbage. The cafeteria generated 6 large 32 gallon garbage cans daily full of trash during lunch. Today Blaine generates two full 32 gallon cans of recycling, approximately 1 32 gallon can of compost, and only ½ 32 gallon can of trash daily during lunch.

Randy Self

Randy has been the staff contact for the green team for the past several years. He talks with students constantly about the environment and sustainability. He has been a valued source of guidance for our green team efforts. He is also involved with Blaine's solar panel project in which he has been a great source of support for the group.

Karen Kubota

Karen Kubota started the recycling/composting program in the fall of 2009. Even though her youngest child has graduated from Blaine, she continues to be involved in the composting and recycling program. She has been a source of guidance for Blaine's green team. She was the driving force to secure new SlimJim recycling and composting containers for the hallways. She came in during the summer before school to help label and distribute the new matching trash and recycling containers. When there is a need for someone to fill in for lunch time trainings, she is willing to come and help out. Karen has written articles for the school newsletter promoting sustainability.

Kimberlee Farvour



The program was in jeopardy of not continuing in the fall when Karen's child graduated from Blaine. Karen had been running the program for 4 years. Kimberlee stepped right up to the plate. She came in during the summer before school to help label and distribute new SlimJim matching trash and recycling containers in the hallways of the school. She came into school to train students for weekly composting duty. She worked with classroom teachers to insure that there would be coverage for composting monitoring during lunch time. Kimberlee has been instrumental in coming up with ideas to promote sustainability at Blaine. Kimberlee is cheerful and enthusiastic making composting a job that kids want to participate in.

Ben Eckhart, Stephanie Peterson, & Susanne Fischer

Kimberlee unexpectedly returned to work and her schedule made it impossible to come to school for the weekly compost trainings. When Ben, Stephanie, and Susanne became aware of the situation they were willing to help. They have been kind volunteers to help train students for weekly compost duty. Ben makes funny jokes with students and makes compost duty fun for them."

Nominated by Yumiko Ordal

Yumiko Ordal

"Yumiko has been a kind volunteer to help train students for weekly compost duty. She is very diligent and conscientious. She has worked with teachers to resolve issues with scheduling, so that students don't miss class time. Yumiko has been instrumental in coming up with ideas to promote sustainability at Blaine."

Nominated by Karen Kubota

Chief Sealth International High School, **Jessie Dirks**

"Jessie is the leader of our school's Green Team. She has led the way to keep our lunchroom composting program going. She spoke in front of the school board last spring to advocate for the addition of bottle filling stations to our school's drinking fountains to encourage the use of reusable bottles. Currently, she is collecting signatures on a petition to ban bottled water sales in school vending machines. Jessie is passionate about protecting the planet and spreads her enthusiasm among her peers. She has organized several Green Team events this year including campus cleanups, hikes, and invasive species removal."

Nominated by Noah Zeichner



Cleveland High School, **Jennifer Williams, Ayan Mohamed, Izet Mendoza, Carmen Berrysmith**

"These four young women have been leading the Cleveland Recycling Club throughout last year and this year as they have launched a successful composting program at their school.

Cleveland Recycling Club has been effectively running their composting program since spring 2013, after spending a dedicated six months planning and launching it. Students performed a waste audit and discovered that almost 60% of garbage at their school was compostable but going straight to the landfill. They saw this need and wanted to do something about it, so they leveraged their enthusiasm and passion to create a brand new food waste recycling system. Over six months the students met with experts, painted

new containers, recruited student volunteers, published articles and visited classrooms to educate peers about the value of composting. During Earth Week 2013 students launched Cleveland High School's first compost system, and since then, these same students have been showing up every day to help their peers sort food waste and have been managing a cohort of more than 30 student volunteers to ensure that the percentage of compostable waste in their dumpster goes from 60 to zero.

The Recycling Club used scientific inquiry and a community needs assessment to successfully implement this program and keep it running. Students gained valuable skills in assessing a need in their community through a waste audit, planning a project that addressed that need, and then managing a large scale program that involves peer management.

The Recycling Club recruited and is currently managing a cohort of 30 student volunteers and participating in school-wide education. They learned about the environmental importance of collecting food waste, developed project management and volunteer coordination skills, public speaking skills in the classroom, over the announcements, and at school wide assemblies, and community engagement skills. Most importantly, they learned how to see a need in their community and engage their peers in a project to address that need and promote positive change.

Both the school and wider community were affected. Talking to students and teachers alike, Cleveland had a long-standing reputation for having trash everywhere and even having rats run through the hallways. Recycling Club has focused the camera lens on waste at Cleveland both initially by launching a recycling program throughout their school and now through implementing composting in the cafeteria. The Cleveland hallways and cafeteria are clean now, and students take pride in being members of the Cleveland Recycling Club. Through this program, Cleveland is successfully diverting 1 ton of waste per month and turning it into usable, nutrient-rich soil. This diversion translates into significant cost savings for Cleveland administration because using a local compost company is significantly cheaper than shipping landfill waste to eastern Oregon. Finally, students were impacted positively through service learning. Seniors at risk of not graduating because of service requirements suddenly found it easy to get hours through service literally right in their community. National Honor Society and Key Club as well banded together to complete service hour requirements in their own school.

Cleveland has reduced the amount of its waste going to the landfill by 1 ton/month, and the Recycling Club has a long term goal of decreasing the food waste in their garbage bins from 60% to 0%. Their project has a two-fold impact on the environment: an immediate benefit of reducing waste going to the landfill and increasing the amount of recycled food waste in their community, and a long-term benefit of raising awareness about environmental issues by engaging their peers, teachers, and administrators in volunteerism and awareness campaigns about the importance of reducing waste."

Nominated by Sarah Machacek, YMCA Earth Service Corps Program Coordinator

Hamilton International Middle School, Mike Tillman

"Mike came to Hamilton as the new custodian in January 2014, and went immediately to work to make the school greener.

Mike put all of his positive energies into improving recycling and food waste at lunch at HIMS. He brought all waste containers back to a single location, so he could monitor what the students were doing and cheerfully guide them to sorting their waste properly. He engaged the principal and staff and asked for their support in making recycling and waste reduction a goal for everyone in the school.



Mike supported the Green Team's efforts to become Washington Green Schools certified (see waste audit photo). He is open to new ideas but also has broad experiences in getting things done and is so good at dealing with the kids. He is a huge help with managing recycling and food waste collection at special events and always comes up with practical solutions for new situations.



Bottom line, Mike has made a huge difference at Hamilton in three short months. On March 19, his request to reduce the garbage and recycling dumpsters at the school was approved. The garbage dumpster was reduced from 6 yards to 4, and the recycling dumpster reduced from 8 yards to 6.

Mike is a joy to work with, the kids like and respect him, and he knows how to get things done. He is a true Conservation Champion."

Nominated by Barb Burrill, Green Team parent volunteer



John Muir Elementary, Michael Tamayo

"He is heading up collecting drink pouches (Capri suns) at our school to send in to Terracycle so they will not be put in the landfills. He has also lead projects making pouches and purses with the drink pouches. He organized a better way to have the students count the drink pouches. So far he has collected over 1,000 drink pouches!"

Nominated by Gabrielle Gousie

John Muir Elementary, Mrs. McManus & Ms. Shorr

"They have been running the composting program at John Muir for many many years and our kids have learned a lot about recycling and reuse and composting. Students in grades 4 and 5 have the opportunity to volunteer in lunchroom during the 3 lunch periods to guide other students in placing compostable items in the proper bin and separating the compost from recyclable items and garbage. This activity is good for the environment and helps us save money!"

Nominated by Steven Marsh, Librarian

John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence, Michelle Mansfield

"Michelle is constantly looking for ways to make our energy use more efficient and continuously monitors our recycle bins. She is also a member of the Green Committee."

Nominated by Greg Hughes



John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence, Rina Fa'amoe



"In every aspect, Rina shows she is genuinely concerned and cares about the environment. She is passionate and a very positive influence on her co-workers, students, and staff."

Nominated by Sean McManus



Lafayette Elementary, Cynthia Adams

"Lafayette Elementary has had an active Green Team for five years. It includes students from kindergarten through fifth grade. Green Team meets every Friday before school, and has between 25-45 students in attendance. Green Team is free to all Lafayette students. Cynthia

Adams is the faculty sponsor of this group.

Lafayette's Green Team has

been instrumental in bringing a composting program to the school. Green Team helped provide small composting bins for classrooms who wished to participate. Thanks to composting and recycling efforts at Lafayette, the school's solid waste is below

the school district's benchmark.

This year, Green Team is focused on reducing water consumption at Lafayette. Contact has been made with the Head Custodial Engineer of the school to place a work order to have the duration of water flow reduced per faucet. Green Team will also educate the students of the school about how to save water, and the reasons why this is important. Green Team's goal is to reduce water usage to below 75 gallons per student per month.





The Lafayette Green Team is currently planting a butterfly garden to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. The goal is to provide a habitat which supports butterflies. Research, design, and study of the life cycle of butterflies has taken place in Green Team meetings. Students have also created art projects featuring butterflies.

The Green Team has produced and performed plays about composting and recycling. They also plan to show a TED talk video about how to use fewer paper towels to the student body at Lafayette.



During the past three years, Green Team has participated in wonderful field trips. One year, the Lafayette Green Team met with the Seattle Mariners to talk about the composting and recycling efforts at Safeco Field. The children met the superheroes Captain Plastic and Kid Compost, and learned that the Mariners recycle or compost over 80% of their garbage. The Green Team also went to the Woodland Park Zoo, and learned about the ZooDoo Program. This year, the Green Team will attend Weather Day at Safeco Field."

Nominated by Karmen Nordhogen, Assistant Principal

McDonald International Elementary School, Joanne Querin-Sorenson

"The success of McDonald's composting programming relies on a handful of key participants, and one of the most significant is our cafeteria manager, Joanne Querin-Sorensen. With her active cooperation we were able to start the very first day of the school year and we've been filling the compost bin every week since. She shows her commitment to composting every day as she is the sole compost monitor/sorter after breakfast. She volunteers to clean our tools and sets out the sorting trays before every lunch. Not only is she committed to the program on principal, she is equally serious that it be done correctly and safely. When some dog waste was dumped in our compost bin, she made sure we had a new bin within a week. During that week's wait for the replacement bin, she was one of the main volunteers to cart the cafeteria's compost to her own bin at home for multiple days so as not to risk the chance of contamination.

The other essential volunteers of our team -- parent Tarah Helliwell (in her second year as chair of McDonald International's Green Team), teachers Katherine Berg, Michelle Uhlenkott, Amber Vandermeulen and Kathleen Wong, and trained student monitors from their 3rd, 4th and 5th grade classes; and a small cadre of regular parent volunteers -- would all agree: without the thoughtful, enthusiastic, generous and kind oversight of Joanne, this educationally and environmentally important program would be seriously undermined.

We very highly recommend that Joanne Querin-Sorensen be recognized as a conservation champion this year."

Nominated by McDonald International Green Helper Team (MIGHT)

"Joanne's dedication to helping to create a healthy atmosphere in our lunch room, and her encouragement of the children to engage in composting and recycling has inspired other staff and students. She is clearly dedicated to helping to improve our environment."

Nominated by Dan Golosman, Principal



McDonald International Elementary School, Tarah Helliwell

"Last year McDonald International was still a young school (the District reopened us in temporary quarters in 2010/11) and had just moved into the newly renovated B.F. McDonald building on N.54th Street. There was a whole list of things that needed doing, including starting up our own composting programing. As Volunteer Coordinator I put out a call for a chair person. And one parent responded -- Tarah Helliwell -- who was exactly the person we required. She was committed to the idea that as a responsible institution we needed such a program, understanding both the environmental, educational and economic importance of it. She found out who she needed to contact; did the paperwork; secured funding; got parent volunteers, upper-grade teachers and students on board; purchased and gathered the supplies we needed; made recycling/composting/landfill posters and signs (till printed ones came); drew up the guidelines and procedures; received official approval for our program to begin; and even coined for us a name -- MIGHT -- McDonald International Green Helper Team. Within two months of Tarah taking on the chair position, we were properly separating our school meal waste. She also does more than her fair share on the frontline of the cafeteria compost program, coming in at least once a week as a parent volunteer to supervise on site during our 4 lunch periods. I can say without exaggeration that we would not have the successful compost program we have at McDonald today without the leadership and hard work of Tarah Helliwell. She is a true conservation champion!"

Nominated by Tom Crane, McDonald PTA Volunteer Coordinator

Nathan Hale High School, Mary Sue Walker

"Mary Sue is the teacher advisor of our YESC (YMCA Earth Service Corps) at Nathan Hale. She has worked with this group of students for 5 years and has helped build it into one of the largest and most influential clubs at Hale. There are about 40 members in the club currently. Mary Sue adheres to the guiding principle that the students should take responsibility for leadership, event planning, and meeting facilitation, and she does a wonderful job of modeling these skills for the students. With Mary Sue's guidance, the club students have continued to promote our recycling and food composting programs at Hale. In addition, they have held at least 2 work parties per year to remove invasive plants on the Hale campus. The club held a silverware drive in order to reduce our students' dependence on plastic utensils. Mary Sue will be taking a leave of absence next year and handing over club leadership to another Hale teacher. I would LOVE to see Mary Sue be recognized for the hard work she has dedicated to resource conservation at Hale."

Nominated by Jessica Torvik

Olympic Hills Elementary, Yusuf Abdikadir

"Yusuf is a 4th grade student member of our school's Green Team. He gives up his lunch recess one day a week to help everyone sort their waste. He is super dependable-never needs a reminder and is always willing to help out in another student's absence. Yusuf noticed that a lot of the kindergarteners didn't know how to sort their waste so he took it upon himself to contact teachers and make presentations to their classes. Here are comments from a couple of our Kindergarten teachers:

Yusuf was very well informed about the topic and presented the information in an engaging and educational manner. Yusuf showed great initiative and leadership during his presentation. The students were highly engaged with Yusuf and his presentation and are



currently implementing the methods he taught about recycling and composting in the classroom.

Yusuf was thoughtful and an excellent teacher, breaking down each step of the green approach into concrete steps with objects kids could use to decide whether the item was trash, compost, or recycling. He answered questions and promoted great discussion. The kids hung on every word!"

Nominated by Debbie Bermet

Orca K-8, Marletta Iwasyk



"For 40 years, Marletta has been a tireless leader of environmentalism. In 1974, as one of the founders of the Allen Free School, she taught students to be stewards of the Earth by growing their own food in the school's garden. When the program moved to the Columbia Building, Marletta expanded her teaching by including recycling and composting. Lunch leftovers were trenched and buried, and students collected glass recycling to earn funds for their environmental learning camping trips! Fast

forward to 2014 ... on any given day, you will find Marletta in the Orca lunchroom checking on the students efforts, rinsing out yogurt containers, and wheeling her cart back to the classroom to pour out the leftover milk from students' cartons. In addition, she takes the leftover vegetable waste to her classroom worm bin -- an endless source of amazement to her kindergartners. She is a staunch supporter of the school's garden program and regularly imparts her wisdom to all of Orca's students. In addition to diverting thousands of pounds of waste from landfills, Marletta has created generations of earth stewards.

For these reasons, I nominate this extraordinary, indefatigable woman as a conservation champion."

Nominated by Cambria Cox



Pathfinder K-8, Amy Pille

"Amy works with most of the classes in the school to build a school garden. She created and leads the green team recycling crew here as well, which has members in every grade. She has also worked to get a water catchment system set up to catch rainwater off of our roof."

Nominated by Patrick Wildermann

Pathfinder K-8, Patrick Wildermann & the Earth Project

“Patrick has been instrumental in keeping the Earth Project in the limelight at our school. He has recruited many parent volunteers that participate in our garden project, Saturday work projects that promote our organic garden, building worm bins, plant green houses/hot houses and helps keep our compost and recycling teams up and running. He and his team have secured the installation of a cistern water system to reuse rainwater from our school roof to water our garden. Patrick devotes several hours per week towards the Earth Project and promoting conservation and reduced waste. Patrick and his team hosted a Harvest Festival in November including tours of our garden, a potluck of foods grown in gardens, fun earth wise projects for our students and families as well as environmental organizations with tables to promote a sustainable life. It has become one of our most attended school events. On April 5th the Earth Project is hosting a garden clean up and build where our school community comes together to work outside in our garden getting ready for the planting season. Patrick establishes a family water plan for over the summer to keep our garden growing. Families sign up to take turns coming to the school to water the garden and check to make sure all is well.”

Nominated by David Dockendorf, Principal

Whittier Elementary, Julia Ward

“She has organized a “conservation based” overnight learning experience for all 5th graders to go to NatureBridge, as well as adapting current science curriculum to increase outdoor education and conservation efforts. These photos are from a garden that Ms. Julia and the 5th grade classrooms put together.”

Nominated by Rebecca Adamson

