



## A New Generation is Taking on the Environment

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A new generation is taking a step toward conserving our waste and recycling it. Sixth through eighth graders from Marin middle and junior high schools are teaming up with the Marin Conservation Corps to reduce the volume of waste produced by their schools.

The Marin Conservation Corps is the nation's oldest local conservation corps. It is a private non-profit organization that was founded in 1982. According to the organization's mission statement, its main mission is to "develop the youth of Marin County by providing meaningful employment, education, and training opportunities through projects that conserve natural resources, deliver human services, and respond to public emergencies." The Marin Conservation Corps continues the progress by adding environmental programs in schools that not only teach students about the environment, but also give them hands-on experience by getting them to create projects that help their local environment.

"Through the kids in leadership [class], we want to get everyone involved," said Rosemary Saulino, a teacher at Davidson Middle School. Saulino is working with her leadership class and the Marin Conservation Corps to establish a sustainable recycling program at school.

"Our goal this year is to do it one hundred percent," she said. Saulino's students' first mission was to see exactly what garbage was being brought to school. They collected all the garbage from one lunch period and put it on a huge tarp. They made a graph, which now hangs in Saulino's classroom, of all their findings. The numbers were surprising. From one lunch they found the garbage was almost half food, about a third of which was unopened food. One fifth of the garbage was plastics, 21 percent was paper, and 9 percent was cans and bottles. Since then, the students have been very successful in recycling paper, and they are trying to work on plastic and aluminum recycling as well.

The students at Miller Creek Middle School are also doing their part to conserve. For the past five years, seventh-grade science teacher Sue Holland has been giving students the tools to do so through the environmental education programs she leads.

"We are helping to keep [Miller Creek] as nice as it has always been," said Holland, who works with her students on a program called STRAW, or Students and Teachers Restoring A Watershed. The students take water samples from Miller Creek and make sure the creek is not being polluted from outside sources. Holland also runs the school's ecology club, which has set up a recycling program with help from the Marin Conservation Corps.

What young students are learning now about recycling and the environment will make them understand what needs to be done in the future to sustain local natural resources, these environmental educators say. "The kids in leadership [class] now have a whole different view for

how to help the Earth," said Saulino. "They are now having more motivation to preserve things for themselves and the next generation. They see that natural resources are quickly disappearing, and this program has helped them to really understand that."

"Now the kids are more environmentally conscious and aware, which gives us hope for the environment in the future," said Holland. "Research shows that once they put the information they've learned into action, they are able to understand it better."

## RESOURCES:

Marin Conservation Corps: [www.marincc.org](http://www.marincc.org)

STRAW: [www.bay.org/educate/straw.html](http://www.bay.org/educate/straw.html) and [www.pcz.com/straw.htm](http://www.pcz.com/straw.htm)