PUBLIC EDUCATION EXCELLENCE AWARD APPLICATION
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER AND TOUR PROGRAM

San Mateo County, California
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RethinkWaste, at its LEED® Gold certified Shoreway Environmental Center, has developed an award-winning Environmental Education Center complete with museum-quality indoor exhibits and an outdoor education area that focus on energy and water conservation, and watershed protection. Informative displays include a large solar installation, 10,000 gallon rainwater garden and harvest tank, gardening demonstration area, tables and benches made from reclaimed wood and old tires. As a testament to its popularity and success, the education center has hosted over 11,000 visitors in its first two years (2012 and 2013) of operation.

By conducting close-up tours of the Transfer Station and Materials Recovery Facility operations, visitors learn first-hand what happens to their materials after they leave the curb. The tours give students and the community an opportunity to learn and practice the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot/composting), and also empower them to conserve natural resources at home, school, work or play.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

RethinkWaste’s Environmental Education Center and Tour Program, henceforth “Tour Program,” was launched in January 2012 providing tours to schools and the general public located primarily in the 12 community service area in San Mateo County with approximately 450,000 residents. In keeping with RethinkWaste’s core values to promote resource conservation behavior, the approximately two-hour tour allows visitors to walk onto the Transfer Station tipping floor, tour the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) sorting equipment via a continuous platform that follows the flow of recyclables, and discuss tips and best practices of conserving natural resources. The goal of the Tour Program is to impart environmental and recycling education to visitors that translates to increased waste reduction program participation and a broadening of a conservation ethic. In addition to hosting visitors from the Bay Area, many visitors have heard about the Shoreway Environmental Center and have come from other states and countries to see the state-of-the-art processing facility and education program.
After two years of operation, RethinkWaste’s Tour Program continues to refine and expand its promotion and outreach methods and enjoy increased tour participation (see comparative increases in participants as shown on page 11.) We are excited and energized by our accomplishments to date and are pleased to apply for SWANA’s 2014 Public Education Excellence Award.

**RESEARCH/PLANNING**

*Program description, facts and perceptions*

The South Bayside Waste Management Authority (SBWMA) changed its name to RethinkWaste to eliminate any doubt about the mission of the agency. Formed in 1982, the joint powers authority of 12 public agencies is located in San Mateo County (between San Francisco and San Jose, California) and is nationally recognized for environmental leadership, sustainable materials management practices, and for its contribution toward creating more livable communities.

The primary role of RethinkWaste is to provide cost-effective waste reduction, recycling and solid waste programs to the 93,000 households and over 10,000 businesses in the service area. By providing strategic program oversight and management of the service providers that collect, process, recycle and dispose of materials, RethinkWaste is able to exceed the 50% diversion of waste from landfills, mandated by California Assembly Bill (AB) 939 and has one of the highest residential recycling rates in the country at 66.9%.

To achieve high diversion, RethinkWaste overhauled all aspects of the solid waste handling services program, including remaking the entire collection program, remaking the facility operations services, and developing a **focused and sustained public education program**. This complete system redesign has been recognized on a local and national level, including being awarded the 2012 SWANA Recycling Systems Gold Award and the 2013 California Resource Recovery Association Outstanding Recycling Program Award.

After the successful launch of the new collections program in 2011, it was paramount to continue educating residents on the recycling programs and build program participation. With the new three-cart collection system (recycling, composting and garbage), known in the RethinkWaste service area as CartSMART, residents continually have questions on the program parameters, the need to recycle and compost, and what happens thereafter. The Tour Program is a vital part of the community education effort and gives visitors a chance to have their many questions answered, myths demystified, and find...
out what happens to their materials once they leave the curb. Also, by educating students and adults on the broader concepts of sustainable living, the program introduces and reinforces practices that lead to cleaner and greener communities, today and in the future.

**Synopsis of research methods/program development**

To design a tour program that best fit the needs of the service area, RethinkWaste staff conducted extensive research and consulted with several local and out-of-state jurisdictions that provide environmental education programs in their communities. Information was gathered in various ways including site visits to local environmental education programs, interviews with environmental / recycling coordinators, internet research, and extensive communication with local groups and programs that work in the environmental stewardship arena. This fact-finding process has helped develop strong environmental education partnerships with other local programs that have helped in the Tour Program’s success.

**Materials previously used**

Tour Program materials were developed to continue to expand the community’s knowledge of waste reduction strategies and why it is important to participate in these efforts. Program materials had to be developed from scratch; however, graphic design and implementation materials used for the CartSMART program launch provided a foundation for building the Tour Program materials. Program promotion techniques used included: newsletters, onsite signage and banners, online and print advertising, media coverage, social media (Facebook and Twitter), website, press releases, as well as informational booths at community events.

**Target audience**

The Tour Program was designed to be accessible to all schools, residents and businesses in the RethinkWaste service area, which has a population of approximately 450,000 residents and 10,000 businesses. The primary target audiences are schools, specifically 4, 5 and 6th grade classes in the service area. These specific grades were selected based on research from other programs and with the knowledge that schools typically give responsibility for in-class recycling programs to kids while in these grades -- this practice is common across many schools that have successfully implemented recycling and/or composting programs because kids in these grades tend to participate and take ownership of the programs. The secondary target audience is 3rd, 7th-12th grade students, community groups and the general public from both the RethinkWaste service area and neighboring communities.
The Tour Program and the curriculum used were designed to be flexible and tailored to specific subject-area requests from teachers. For example, a teacher can request that the tour focus on “what goes where” in an effort to remind students to sort correctly at their school’s recycling programs. To achieve this, students engage in a sorting activity, with everyday props to sort into the correct carts, as shown in the photo. A tour that highlights more on renewable and non-renewable resources, will have the class spend time focusing on the interactive renewable and non-renewable activity that visually teaches about the natural resources that are used to make most of our everyday products, e.g. aluminum comes for bauxite a non-renewable resource, and paper from trees, a renewable resource.

Tours are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis and approximately 80% of the tours are provided to schools from inside the RethinkWaste service area and 20% to schools and groups from other communities. Since transportation can be a major obstacle for schools offering student field trips, RethinkWaste provides free busing for classes inside the service area touring the Education Center.

Program goals and strategies
The goals of the Environmental Education Center and the Tour Program were designed to be specific, measurable, and achievable in time. Being a primarily school groups focused program, tours are provided in line with the school calendar year, however community group tours are conducted throughout the year, as the schedule allows. The following are goals of the environmental education tour program:

- To conduct at least 150 tours and host approximately 4,000 visitors in the 1st year of the program (January – December 2012).
- To align the environmental education curriculum to California State Content Standards.
- To have teachers return the following year with new students, to maximize the chances of all students participating in the environmental education tour.
- To keep the tour program topical and relevant to the target audiences.
- To develop a program that accommodates as many visitors as possible interested in learning about resource conservation, waste reduction strategies and practicing the 4Rs.
- To have a more informed community on waste reduction strategies.
- To work within the allocated budget.
- To meet deadlines for developing and producing program promotion materials.
• To conduct safe environmental education tours.

In order to accomplish these goals, RethinkWaste staff worked diligently throughout the planning phase of program development to ensure that all of the facets of the program were incorporated as intended. To accomplish this, while staying on budget, most items were created in-house (e.g., tour script and curriculum, promotional materials such as the Tour Program flyer, webpage for the education center with links to registration forms and lesson plans, safety training and other general information). Tour guidelines were established early and have been essential to ensuring the safety of the program participants (i.e., setting limits on the maximum number of visitors per tour to a total of 50 students and chaperones for school groups, and 40 for adult tours.) To date, the Tour Program has been incident and accident-free.

Public outreach was essential for the success of the environmental education Tour Program. Both traditional and social media outreach methods were implemented, and continue to be used, including the following:

• Information was provided on the RethinkWaste website on the different aspects of the program, school group tours versus public tours.
• Online tour request forms were created.
• A program information flyer was developed and sent to:
  o School districts, principals and teachers at all schools in the RethinkWaste service area.
  o Community facilities including libraries, community centers, senior centers, etc.
• Emails were sent and phone calls were made to school district personnel, principals and teachers.
• Informational packets were mailed to school district offices, principals and teachers.
• School site visits and presentations were made to teachers.
• Information on the program was included in bill inserts and in the RethinkWaste quarterly newsletter.
• Press releases were issued to local media.
• Staff worked with affiliated groups to help spread the word via their communication channels.
• An oversized banner with public tour information was installed on the front exterior wall of the Education Center building – clearly visible to the thousands of people who travel along Highway 101 daily.

Obstacles for meeting goals
Several challenges to starting the new Tour Program were identified:
Limited time to promote the new program before its scheduled start.
- Holiday period leading up to the launch of the tour program.
- Uncertainty related to the best time to promote the program information to school teachers.
- School districts slow to approve the dissemination of program information in schools.
  - Large number of schools to reach out to prior to the start of the program – over 100 elementary and middle schools in the RethinkWaste service area.
  - Safety concerns as tour program is conducted at a working Transfer Station and MRF.

To overcome the limited time for program promotion, staff made it a priority to continuously promote the program after its launch. Teachers who participated in the Tour Program in the first six-months were surveyed for feedback on how best to improve the program. Survey results provided insight that teachers prefer to receive emails about the Tour Program two-weeks after the school year begins as that is when they plan field trips for the year. Teachers also preferred receiving both email and hard copy communication. This and other valuable input from the teachers continues to be incorporated in the outreach plan every school year. RethinkWaste staff also continued to call, email or visit the non-responsive school districts in order to get the program material distributed. Some districts sent email blasts to all the schools in their jurisdiction about the Tour Program, which greatly helped in getting the information out to the schools. Staff also made follow-up visits to schools or resent pre-tour packets to schools.

To address the safety concerns, safety training manuals were developed, clear signage at the facility was installed and appropriate safety guidelines were put in place. For example, every visitor is required to wear closed-toe shoes or they will not participate in the tour. In addition appropriate safety equipment, including vest, glasses and hard hats, are provided for all tour participants.

**Opportunities for meeting goals**

As mentioned earlier in the Synopsis of Research Methods section, RethinkWaste staff conducted extensive research and fact-gathering which became invaluable in the shaping of the tour program. This research and clear goals for the program enabled the successful development of curriculum and program promotion material despite the time limitations. The information gathering process proved worthwhile as RethinkWaste started its Tour Program with knowledge of things to avoid gleaned from surveying of similar programs.
IMPLEMENTATION/EXECUTION

Program Implementation – Timeline

With limited program startup time, the implementation timeline below had to be strictly adhered to in order to meet the program launch date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal/Task</th>
<th>Task Completion Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RethinkWaste approves the hiring of two dedicated environmental education staff</td>
<td>June 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Education staff hired to execute program. Coordinator hired in October 2011 and Associate in December 2011</td>
<td>Aug.–Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Decide on the following:</td>
<td>Oct.–Nov. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Grade to offer field trip - 4th-6th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Buses free for both public and private schools in service area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Class size maximum and minimum and chaperone: student ratio - 1:10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. First come first served policy for tours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Request for proposals for school bus service provider – consider the requirements for school districts in regards to insurance, etc.</td>
<td>Oct.–Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop field trip script including the following:</td>
<td>Nov.–Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. 4R concept, clean energy, natural resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Safety guidelines for students and chaperones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. RethinkWaste brief history and Shoreway facility facts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Pre- and post-activities for 4th - 6th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rethinker/Classroom: how best to use the space for learning and reflection</td>
<td>Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Safety equipment purchase and maintenance</td>
<td>Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Design outreach strategy: flyers, webpage, pre-tour packets, contact school districts</td>
<td>Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Scheduling Field Trip: Registration form, pre-tour material and permission slip online</td>
<td>Dec. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Adjust script and activities accordingly</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To accommodate the intended audience of both school groups and the general public, the tours are given on the following days and times:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>12:30-2:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9:30-11:30am AND 12:30-2:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9:30-11:30am AND 12:30-2:30pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every third Thursday of the month is a designated Public Open House Day for the general public, and tours are given from 9:30 - 10:30am and 11:30am - 12:30pm, with reservations required for parties of five or more people. The Public Open House Days have proven to be extremely popular and are booked fully at least two months in advance! In response to the popularity of the tours, starting in the fall 2014, a second public tour day will be added on the 1st Thursday of every month.

Activities used to achieve program goals

The tour experience at the Shoreway Environmental Center is intended to be very “hands-on” and provides visitors the direct experience of following what happens to their recyclables, yard trimmings, food scraps and garbage once they are picked up from their homes and businesses. The tour allows visitors to walk onto the Transfer Station tipping floor and view the hundreds of tons of garbage and yard waste, tour the MRF sorting equipment via a continuous platform that follows the flow of recyclables, and discuss tips and best practices of conserving resources.

The Education Center also houses museum-quality exhibits that showcase creative reuse, and a “renewable or non-renewable matching activity” where visitors learn what natural resources are used to make every-day products. Additional activities are incorporated during a tour depending on the age of the audience, such as the “sorting game” which allows visitors to sort recyclables, and an energy conserving activity which compares energy used in making aluminum cans from recycled versus raw materials.

In the two years since the Tour Program has operated, additional learning tools have been implemented, such as:
• An outdoor education amphitheater with canopy and activity tables.

• A picnic area for classes to have zero waste lunches.

• A “grow-your-own garden” where students learn about planting a garden into compost and get involved in planting activities.

• A “call-to-action” exhibit in the education center that highlights community organizations that are doing great things to conserve natural resources and encourages visitors to act to save resources.

At the end of each tour, adult participants, chaperones, and teachers complete a survey about their experience. Survey results indicate that visitors greatly value their tour experience which educates them about the “big picture” of the waste problem and provides tangible solutions to rethinking their purchase and consumption habits.

**Budget**

The operating budget, exclusive of staff wages and benefits, for the Environmental Education Program for fiscal year 2012-13 (see table on the following page), was $60,000 with a significant portion of the budget allocated to funding for busing, and the rest to program material.

To evaluate the cost effectiveness of the Tours Program, RethinkWaste conducted a benchmarking study in 2014. Operational data was collected from organizations (four public agencies, one nonprofit, and one private company) that operate long-standing, recognized environmental education programs similar to RethinkWaste’s Tour Program. Data collected included service area population, program budget, staffing levels, target audience, program age, and related statistics. RethinkWaste’s per capita costs are about average compared to the survey group at $0.51 per person per year, yet the Tour Program provided more tours in 2013 than any other surveyed program. RethinkWaste’s tour program was also the most productive in terms of number of tours conducted (130 tours per FTE) which is especially remarkable when considering that this was only the second year of the Tour Program operations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOUR PROGRAM BUDGET - $60,000</th>
<th>Costs 2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach printed materials, flyers, brochure</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education material - lesson plans, coloring books</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education activities, sorting relay, paper making</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website online registration, survey, lesson plans etc.</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies for activities</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening at Shoreway</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled Art Contest</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window art projects</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallway video footage</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Busing (4th-6th grade)</strong></td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on $300 per trip @ 100 trips (50% of tours)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Supplies and Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning of walls, replacement of items on exhibit etc.</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement of broken helmets, safety glasses</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly safety vest cleaning</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giveaways</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, office supplies, etc.</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours communication equipment</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainings, conferences</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL COST** $41,250

**Partnerships with other organizations**

RethinkWaste continues to work with past tour participants and community organizations to spread the word to promote the program. Cross promotion of programs with affiliated organizations has also contributed to the success of the program. Yearly, an announcement of the program is printed in San Mateo County’s “Resource Conservation Newsletter” which reaches over 500,000 people in its service area, and press releases accessible by local news media are issued. San Mateo County’s Volunteer Academy program uses the Education Center for its workshops, hence bringing additional people. Events, such as Earth Day, which hosts various vendors, also expose the Education Center to the community. Bill inserts by Recology, often have the Education Center programs promoted.
The Tour Program flyer is emailed to school districts, principals, and teachers who post it on their websites. It is also sent to various city facilities such as libraries, community centers, senior centers, and local businesses. The local chapter of Resource Area for Teaching (RAFT) and the San Mateo County Office of Education also assist in promoting the program. Staff is engaged in a local Education Committee were it continues to promote the program.

**Accomplishments**

In the two years the Tour Program has been operating, over 11,000 visitors have participated in the Tour Program with increased participation year to year. It is anticipated that this trend will continue for year 2014.

The Tour Program continues to be operated as cost effectively as possible, while still meeting and exceeding its intended goals. The program promotional materials were developed on time and made readily accessible to all the target audiences. RethinkWaste continues to work on getting the word out on the program, but is energized and excited with the number of participants to date. The positive feedback that has been received from both teachers and chaperones, shows that the Tour Program is uniquely meeting the needs of the different audiences and is relevant to their studies as well as everyday lives. Please refer to the “Supplemental Materials” section of this application for copies of a few of the surveys that have been filled out by teachers, public tour visitors and chaperones at the end of their tours.

RethinkWaste is also noticing a lot more new teachers bringing their students to participate in the program, and even more exciting are the returning teachers who are attending with their new students to experience the firsthand learning offered by the Tour Program. Now in its third year, about 65

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“Great way to make environmental and conservation lessons more real.”
- Parent
percent are new teachers and 35 percent are returning teachers. This means ongoing outreach efforts are working, and visitors who come and experience the Tour Program are promoting it to others.

To date, we have had a safe, incident free Tour Program, which can be credited to the strong emphasis on safety procedures that are shared before and during the tour. RethinkWaste has kept the educational materials current, and developed and implemented additional components as extensions of the tour program. One such new component was the launching of the “Trash-to-Art Contest” for 4th-6th grade classes in January 2013, which has become an annual contest. Over 20 schools have participated to date and the creative, three dimensional, art pieces have become great additions to the education center.

Also, there is a Free School Compost Giveaway program for both public and private schools in the RethinkWaste service area as well as community groups who can receive up to five 50-pound bags of compost for a school garden project, or up to 20 cubic yards for a landscaping project. Unique too, is the Night@Shoreway event were community groups have an opportunity to explore and learn in a fun and educational way the behind the scenes operations of Shoreway Environmental Center from 4pm-9pm. Two of these events have been implemented. All programs align to the goals of the tour program.

**How the program is unique**
The Shoreway Environmental Education Tour Program is unique in many ways. The unique characteristics of the program are as follows:

1. The program is run and managed by two full-time staff whom are dedicated to ensuring the continuous success of the program. By having the two full-time staff, RethinkWaste was able to reduce the risk of employee turnover that is a problem for other programs that use temporary staffing or interns (many programs cited the problem of employee turnover as diminishing the quality of the program, as employees have no sense of ownership for the program as they run it for a limited period of time.)
2. The varied primary and secondary audience the program targets set it apart from similar programs. Many similar programs target one or two grade levels. RethinkWaste’s variety allows various age groups an opportunity to learn about resource conservation.

3. The RethinkWaste program provides free busing, is run on a first-come, first-served basis and is accessible to both public and private schools. Some programs limit access to mainly public schools.

4. Having a designated day for the general public. Every third Thursday of the month is a designated Public Open House Day for the general public, and tours are given time slots from 9:30 - 10:30am and 11:30am - 12:30pm. This allows the general public that does not fall in either primary or secondary target audience to have an opportunity to learn and practice the 4Rs, and experience a working Transfer Station and MRF, which is an eye-opening experience to many who visit for the first time. In the summer, every Thursday is a Public Open House Day to allow more opportunity for the public to visit.

5. The Tour Program’s exhibit quality, hands-on activities and up-close viewing of recycling and waste handling systems provide an educational and highly memorable experience that is unlike any other.

6. The Shoreway Environmental Education Center is an incubator of “green” ideas and provides a call-to-action to visitors to do their part to protect the environment.

RESULTS/EVALUATION

Target audience participation/reaction to program

The Tours Program continues to receive very positive feedback from the community. An indicator of the program’s success is the ever-growing list of groups that are interested in participating in tours. In addition to the school groups, many community groups and businesses now schedule tours such as community organizations, Scouts groups, camps, business “green” committees, garden clubs and college students.

In an effort to collect direct-feedback from tour participants about their tour experience, teachers, chaperones, and adult participants are asked to fill out a survey. The responses received to date continue to be very positive. Below is a short sample of the many recent comments that tour participants shared at the end of their tour experience.

“This was a “being there” experience for the kids. Our teaching will build from this experience.” (Teacher)

“Fantastic! We love it. This was our second time participating in the program” (Teacher)

“Great use of class time - students know what effect they have on the world.” (Teacher)
“Fantastic! Kids learned a ton. Also relates to our science units.” (Teacher)
“Fantastic use of time. We learn something new every time!” (Teacher)
“Excellent use of class time and direct tie to our environmental research projects.” (Teacher)
“Great way to make environmental and conservation lessons more real.” (Parent)
“Very useful, even adults need education in sorting out trash.” (Parent)
“Amazing. So educational and informative. Hands on. Really enjoyed this tour.” (Parent)

**Measuring success**

Since the inception of the Tours Program an emphasis has been placed setting goals and on the measurement and tracking of results. Below is a list of the Goals and Results that have been set and have been met or exceeded by the program over the first two years of operation.

1. **Goal:** To conduct at least 150 tours and host approximately 4,000 visitors in the first year of the program (January – December 2012). **Results:** 207 tours were conducted in the first year and a total of 5,086 visitors participated in the program.

2. **Goal:** To align the environmental education curriculum to California State Content Standards. **Results:** All pre-tour and post-tour environmental education curriculums are aligned to California State Content Standards.

3. **Goal:** To have returning teachers come to the tour with new students, to maximize the chances of all students participating in the environmental education tour. **Results:** 35 percent of teachers participating in the tour program are returning teachers.

4. **Goal:** To keep the tour program topical and relevant to the target audiences. **Results:** Tour program material/activities are regularly updated and added to best fit an audience. For example, if a teacher requests that the tour focus more on how to conserve natural resources, the tour activities for that group are set to achieve this. Students learn of best practices to conserve natural resources like using reusable bags and water bottles, switching out regular bulbs for fluorescent energy saving bulbs, taking shorter showers, etc.

5. **Goal:** To develop a program that accommodates as many visitors as possible interested in learning about resource conservation, waste reduction strategies and practicing the 4Rs. **Results:** The tour program accommodates both school groups and community groups such as Boys and Girls Scout Clubs, Garden Clubs, and businesses, among others. In addition the third Thursday of every month is designated for the public (no school groups on this day). In summer, every Thursday is a public open house day.

6. **Goal:** To have a more informed community on waste reduction strategies. **Results:** We have seen an overall increase in residential composting (29 percent) and recycling (25 percent), and a decrease in garbage (18 percent) through the new CartSMART services and the public education and outreach efforts, including the Tour Program.
7. **Goal:** To work within the allocated budget. **Results:** The Tour Program has met and exceeded all of its goals while coming in under budget. Expenses totaled only $41,250 out of the $60,000 allocated budget. Program materials and activities are all under budget.

8. **Goal:** To meet deadlines for developing and producing program promotion materials. **Results:** All program curriculum and promotional material were ready by the launch of the first tour in January 2012.

9. **Goal:** To conduct safe environmental education tours. **Results:** To date, we have had safe incident free tours which are credited to the emphasis put on the need to adhere to all safety rules.

**How program can be improved**

It would be meaningful to conduct case studies that tie back participation in the Tour Program to behavior change in waste reduction and resource conservation. RethinkWaste has conducted one such study with a local school that had no recycling before participating in the Tour Program, and now boasts a 70% diversion rate. While the program is relatively new, RethinkWaste staff plans to look into additional potential case studies that have resulted in the start or increase in material diversion due to drawing inspiration from participating in the program.

Feedback from teachers has also indicated the desire to have the program include intensive outreach to schools, providing technical assistance for starting or reinforcing recycling programs.

**Ability to replicate program in other communities**

RethinkWaste takes its role and responsibility as a leader very seriously, and believes that all efforts should be collaborative, both with its Member Agencies and other communities and agencies as opportunities arise. The Tour Program, as well as all other RethinkWaste programs, is designed in such a manner that it can be easily replicated by others with similar goals and aspirations. There is extensive tracking, documentation and oversight of all program features, from development to launch, to ensure that every step in the process is clearly defined, with measured results. RethinkWaste has shared and will continue to share its knowledge, ideas and programs with anyone interested in sustainability.
SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS
San Mateo Students Tour Shoreway Environmental Center

Students from Baywood Elementary were the first to experience the new free Schools Group Tours program at the center.

Posted by Laura Dudnick (Editor), January 19, 2012 at 07:55 pm

Fourth and fifth grade students from in San Mateo were the first to partake in a new free tour program at RethinkWaste’s Shoreway Environmental Center last week.

The students, who toured the center on Jan. 10 wearing yellow vests and hard hats, kicked off their tour with a lesson about the 4Rs and the Shoreway Environmental Center from RethinkWaste Environmental Education Coordinator Faustina Mututa.
FIVE PLACES

Rated G for green and good

Neutralizing our carbon footprint, reusing what we’ve once discarded, or buying locally sourced products are just some of the ways we can “go green.” Al Gore and company have been effective at steering us in the right direction, but for those who really embrace the three “R’s” (reduce, reuse, recycle), here are five places where “trash” becomes treasure.

— By Erin Casavant Delamay, erin@sfchronicle.com

1. Recology's Artist in Residence Program, San Francisco
    For more than 20 years, this recycling center has provided artists with access to materials, a stipend, and a large studio space with which to create a variety of artistic creations using discarded objects. At the top of a small hill alongside the facility is a thriving garden where hummingbirds hover, a variety of succulents line gravel-paved paths, and many of the resident artists’ sculptures can be viewed en plein air. By reservation only, 501 Tunnel Ave., (415) 330-1414, www.rethinkwaste.org.

2. h2hotel, Healdsburg
    From the repurposed gymnasium floor that’s now underfoot in the meeting room, to the reclaimed elm planks that serve as dining tables inside the restaurant, to the recycled wood that forms the staircase, the h2hotel exemplifies “eco-chic.” Overlooking Foss Creek in Sonoma County (a restoration project in itself), most everything inside the hotel is either sustainable or repurposed; including the lobby’s “Fireplace” crafted from salvaged Steinway piano cords. 219 Healdsburg Ave., (707) 923-5251, www.h2hotel.com.

3. Architectural Salvage, San Diego
    Got an idea to turn an old fireplace mantel into a bookshelf? Done. Glass door knobs make you weak in the knees? Choose from clear or jewel-toned. This “Little Italy” neighborhood store has a wealth of found objects to get your creative juices flowing—just might end up with a design project you never knew you were going to commit to. 2401 Kettner Blvd., (619) 696-1313, www.architecturalsalvage.com.

4. EcoVibe Apparel, Portland, Ore.
    Ready to make a sustainability statement? This fashion and environmentally conscious store features clothing that’s manufactured using recycled polyester, jewelry crafted from recycled gold and sterling silver, boots that combine a renewable resource (wool) with recycled cork, and leather, and jeans that are made using repurposed fabric diverted from the textile waste stream. 521 NW Everett St., (503) 560-1163, www.ecovibeapparel.com.

5. Shoreway Environmental Center, San Carlos
    750 tons is a lot of garbage—but that’s how much refuse the Shoreway Environmental Center processes every day. At this LEED Gold “materials recovery facility,” you can neon yellow vest and protective glasses and see where your trash ends up. Once a month they offer a Public Open House, where informative guides lead a two-hour tour that includes a stop inside the transfer station, a short video, and a second-story view of the recycling center. 333 Shoreway Road, (650) 802-3590, www.rethinkwaste.org/shoreway-environmental-education-center.
Shoreway Environmental Center – Tour Program Survey

One of our Core values is:
“We believe providing environmental education for children and adults fosters a greater resource conservation ethic which results in more livable and sustainable communities”

Please take a moment to answer the following questions based on your experience on the tour today. Your feedback is valuable and will help us improve our tour program and meet our environmental education value.

Date: 11/12 Field Trip Type ☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ After School
School/Group: ☐ Private E-mail: ____________________________
Grade: ☐ 3rd & below ☐ 4th ☐ 5th ☐ 6th ☐ Other
I knew to contact about the tour from: ☐ Website ☐ Rethink ☐ Recycleworks ☐ Other

City you live in: Foster City ☐ House ☐ Apartment, Condo or Townhouse
Where you live do you have access to: a) Recycling cart ☐ Yes ☐ No b) Compost (green cart) ☐ Yes ☐ No At school do you have access to: a) Recycling cart ☐ Yes ☐ No b) Compost (green cart) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you more inclined to reduce, reuse, recycle and rot (compost) ☐ Yes ☐ No
Comments: Inspired not to do an even better job at home!

1. What did you like best about the tour?
   The organization! Everything was well planned and executed perfectly! The kids enjoyed being included.

2. Are there areas we can improve upon?
   Education!

3. What did you think of this tour as a use of student/group time?
   Excellent educational tools for the children-clear information and instruction in age appropriate manner.

4. What suggestions do you have as to how we can improve the tour experience?
   Exceptional tour and our guides were just fantastic!

5. Educator(s) was receptive and provided accurate information
   Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

6. I will participate in my city’s residential recycling program
   Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

7. I will participate in my city’s residential food scraps recycling program (green cart)
   Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

8. I will encourage my family to find new ways to reduce, reuse, recycle and rot (compost)
   Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ N/A

9. If you would like to comment on any of the above, please indicate question number(s) and provide comments on back.