



26 West Anapamu St, 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
tel: 805.963.0583 fax: 805.962.9080 • www.cecsb.org



PRESS RELEASE - For Immediate Release

Contact:
Community Environmental Council
Kathi King – 805.963-0583x108; kking@cecmail.org

Update: CEC's "Rethink the Drink" bottled water reduction project

Santa Barbara, CA, April 11, 2012: The Community Environmental Council (CEC) has installed ten refill stations on local elementary, junior high, high school and college campuses since the beginning of 2010 and is reporting that students have used the stations **137,887** times as of March 20 – dramatically reducing their use of disposable plastic water bottles.

CEC launched its "Rethink the Drink" campaign in January 2010, installing six refilling stations at Santa Barbara High (two units), Santa Barbara Junior High, Franklin Elementary (two units, also serving Adelante Charter School), Montecito Union Elementary and the Westmont College gym. The refill stations dispense cold, filtered water with both a regular water fountain spout and a quick-fill mechanism, and electronically display the number of times they've been used.

Schools added during the current school year include Adams Elementary, Monroe Elementary, Harding Elementary and Cleveland Elementary. A grant from the Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation will add the Hope District's three elementary schools and La Cuesta High School during the summer of 2012.

All schools are reporting a dramatic reduction in plastic water bottle and cup usage. Prior to the project, a waste audit at Adams Elementary showed that students, faculty and staff were using (and throwing away) 250 single use water bottles per week. Since installing a refill station, they use fewer than 20 per week. Over the course of a school year, that's the equivalent of going from more than 10,000 bottles to less than 900.

Monroe Elementary Principal Celeste Darga says, "The students and staff at Monroe School are very excited to have a water refill station in our cafeteria. Everyone is using it daily, and we are saving 500 water bottles and 2000 cups a month. Students feel like they are truly making a difference in preserving the planet- one cup at a time. At Monroe School we are "Rethinking the Drink" every day!"

To encourage the students to use the refill stations, CEC and its project funders distributed reusable stainless steel canteens to all students and staff at participating elementary schools and did targeted distributions at the junior high and high schools.

In addition, CEC staff has appeared at five all-school assemblies and visited more than ten classrooms to educate the student bodies about the negative health and environmental impacts of bottled water. These impacts include:

- The production and transportation of bottled water is very energy intensive. More than 17 million barrels of oil each year are used to bring bottled water to our stores -- enough to fuel one million vehicles for a year.
- Bottled water is not safety-tested as often as tap water, and can cost up to 10,000 times the price of local tap water.

“Despite being recyclable, most bottled water is consumed on-the-go, and fewer than 30% of the bottles are recycled,” said CEC’s Rethink the Drink Program Manager Kathi King. “The rest take up disproportionate space in our landfills or end up as trash in storm drains and watersheds. Americans are throwing away more than 2.5 million of these bottles per hour.”

Rethink the Drink’s funding partners are the Orfalea Foundation, the William E. Weiss Foundation, the Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation, the Ann Jackson Family Foundation, and MedBridge Development.

About the Community Environmental Council

The Community Environmental Council is an environmental non-profit established in 1970. CEC’s mission is to identify, advocate and raise awareness about the most pressing environmental issues that affect the Santa Barbara region. We currently focus all of our energy on building a community-based movement that weans the region off of fossil fuels in one generation — *Fossil Free by '33*.

Website: www.cecsb.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rethinkthedrink

If you’d like more information about this topic, please call Kathi King at 805/963-0583 x108, or email Kathi King at kking@cecmail.org.

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