

The John Ernest Foundation

YES

Youth Environmental Scholarship

Name: **Rebecca Dorst**

School: Menlo-Atherton High School

Abstract:

Help the Environment through Local Projects (HELP)

The San Francisco Peninsula is one of the most beautiful places to live on earth. The skyline ridge is exquisite, with its trails, trees, wild animals, parks and magnificent views to the ocean and the bay. The Peninsula is packed with heritage oaks, pines, reservoirs and lakes. The San Francisco Bay is one of the most unique watersheds in the world for its estuaries, wildlife, raw beauty and yet it also provides a perfect place for boating, sailing and a separation from the endless development that might otherwise occupy that space. This Peninsula is the place I call home, and its beauty is something I do not take for granted. Now here's what I am doing to keep it that way.

In my desire to keep the Peninsula clean and green, I've created a web page via my Facebook website, Help the Environment through Local Projects (HELP). In this page, I have invited friends to join me in studying issues, researching, learning, and finding realistic solutions to protect what we have. From the most basic ways of helping by reusing resources through charity donations to the more involved efforts of volunteerism at schools, parks, and organizations, I have tried to provide ways for my friends to get involved.

The H.E.L.P. page is definitely a work in progress. My page solicits the suggestions of my peers and friends. I hope to add additional links and more useful information through

their involvement. As additional programs are recommended, I plan to include a summary of their environmental focus and their contact information as well.

So, in perhaps just a few months, we anticipate having thousands of people accessing the H.E.L.P. page with project ideas, reports of their own environmental efforts, and hopefully some newsworthy results.

Below is a list of the different categories I have researched in my website. The list will grow over time as ideas come in but we must get started where it is easiest, at home. In my web page, I cover recycling, re-use, composting, education, donation and volunteerism programs.

Minimizing household waste through recycling is one of the easiest ways to help in terms of reducing waste, preserving resources and conserving energy. It's amazing how much waste one family can produce in one week. With a little effort that waste can be diminished dramatically by breaking down and recycling cardboard boxes, tissue boxes, cereal boxes and the like, 'warehouse' packaging, as well recycling mail, newspapers, plastic bottles and food containers, milk cartons, glass and plastic wrap. Add yard waste and composting to the recycling mix, and next thing you know, you will have a hard time even filling one garbage can a week! That's my goal for every neighbor on my block and perhaps with a little education from my site, it will become a reality.

More difficult is the recycling of materials that are not so easily disposed of – batteries, light bulbs and Styrofoam. The H.E.L.P. page provides information on where to deposit those materials as well. The site recommends that families store these items safely in a convenient location until there is sufficient quantity to rationalize a special trip to the appropriate recycling center. For those truly motivated, perhaps families can pool efforts in reducing waste in their own neighborhoods. Again, this is something the site can encourage.

Composting of organic material is another tremendous way for households to reduce significant waste, and actually produce a tangible benefit to their own yard soil and gardens. The H.E.L.P. page provides links to educate and instruct individuals to collect common kitchen waste like coffee grounds, egg shells, vegetable and fruit scraps. With composting, these materials are mixed in with grass clippings and leaves, and in as little as a month they will break down to create a nutrient rich soil that can be amended to gardens. This is another perfect way for teens and their families to get involved right in their own home!

The re-use of household items is another idea that can and should be encouraged. I will make sure that the H.E.L.P. page endorses that and provides locations where people can donate books, music equipment, school supplies, electronics and furniture.

Education is where it starts. The H.E.L.P. page discusses what it means to be 'green.' The page encourages individuals to learn about ways to conserve

Donation of household items is another category that is featured on the H.E.L.P. page. Links to bay area charitable organizations and the items they collect are listed for individuals to easily choose.

Volunteering is one of the best ways to help our communities. If each individual does his or her part by looking for ways to get involved, cleaning up after others, or contributing to local causes, this will help reduce our city's need to hire staff when citizen's efforts might be enough!

The effort to protect our environment is one that we all can appreciate . It can start small, but it can end up with big results if everyone does their part. While this is just a beginning, I think that this page, with already over 200 members in one week's effort

will make a huge impact over time. I look forward to reporting our results over time but more importantly, please check out my H.E.L.P. page and you too can post your efforts and success stories!