

Go Green! Viva Verde! Committee Meeting Minutes

Sept. 4, 2008, 2 p.m.

Room AS 103C

Attendees: Sandra Gonzalez-Lamb, Recruiting; Brad Chandler, Biology; Thomas Murguia, Writing Lab; Kim Corbin, Fine and Performing Arts/Speech; Esther Rodriguez, Housekeeping; Camille Fiorillo, Library; Irene Scharf, Library; Leandro Esparza, Rec Sports; Karen Mahaffy, Art; and Denise Barkis Richter, Communications.

Denise opened the meeting shortly after 2 p.m. and welcomed everyone, especially new members Dolly Rosas, the registered nurse in Palo Alto's Health Center, and Anna Cohen Miller, an ESOL adjunct. Dolly is going to serve on the Energy Reduction Subcommittee, and Anna is going to serve on the Air Quality Subcommittee.

Palo Alto's green movement was recently recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as one of 14 Texas colleges and universities who have made environmental sustainability a priority. The "San Antonio Express-News" featured Palo Alto's recognition in an Aug. 21, 2008, blog entry written by Melissa Ludwig, a higher education reporter. In addition, Palo Alto was one of the local colleges and universities featured in an August 31, 2008, story in the Metro section of the "Express-News" for our sustainability movement. A large photo of Palo Alto's VIVA VERDE logo was displayed within the story that was also written by Ludwig.

Denise thanked Vince Bosquez in Palo Alto's PR Department for continuously updating our Go Green! ;Viva Verde! webpage, and she encouraged everyone to check out the page's new links.

Go Green! ;Viva Verde! Committee Members stayed active over the summer:

- Kim Corbin, Irene Scharf, Greg Pasztor, and Denise Richter attended the Sierra Club Environmental Panel at the Witte Museum on June 17. Representatives from the Mayor's Office, City Public Service, Solar SA, Metropolitan Partnership for Energy, and Alamo Sierra spoke about their sustainability efforts.

- Throughout the summer, Kim Corbin and Sandra Gonzalez-Lamb met with the District Recycling Committee to research and interview potential waste/recyclable vendors. Vista Fibers, which recently changed its name to Greenstar, was awarded the District contract.
- Kim Corbin and Denise Richter toured Trinity University on Aug. 8 to learn how their recycling program works.
- On Aug. 21, the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee hosted a Green Tea for all employees who are in charge of ordering supplies for their departments. Camille Fiorillo and Denise Richter spoke of the importance of “closing the gap” by not only recycling, but ordering recycled products. Camille pointed out the green buyers’ guide in the Office Depot catalog. In addition, attendees were reminded to reduce, reuse, and recycle. At the tea, Yvonne Richardson, Reading (EL Building); Geri Reynolds, IT (OZ Building); and Patty Medina, PASSkey (GE Building) volunteered to be “Building Captains” for our upcoming recycling program.
- Finally, Denise Richter, Kim Corbin, Leandro Esparza, Cha Guzman, Vince Bosquez, Robert Triana, Eliazar Reyna, and Bobby Garza toured the Greenstar plant on Aug. 22. Zach Walter, Greenstar’s account executive, led the tour through giant warehouses of paper, plastic, metal, and glass. The City of San Antonio and the City of Austin both use Greenstar.

Kim Corbin is working to schedule a meeting with John Strybos, Associate Vice Chancellor of Facilities for the Alamo Community College District; Karen Gottfried, Contracting Coordinator in the District’s Acquisitions Department; Robert Triana, Palo Alto’s Superintendent of Facilities; Eliazar Reyna, Palo Alto’s Housekeeping Foreman; and Zach Walter, Greenstar’s Account Executive, to finalize Palo Alto’s Recycling Program. Currently, all Alamo Community Colleges except Palo Alto have begun their recycling program. Palo Alto has decided to go with the single-stream (mixing paper, plastic, metal, and glass in one container) option, which is the same option employed by the City of San Antonio for at-home recycling. Interesting factoid: Palo Alto recycled 20.3 tons of paper from September 2006 through August 2007. Zero plastic, metal, and glass were recycled; however, Coca Cola delivered 114,850 plastic bottles and 17,323 aluminum cans to Palo Alto from February 2007 through January 2008.

Denise highlighted the committee's accomplishments since its inception in January of 2008:

- Established eight subcommittees (Environmental Citizenship, Recycling & Solid Waste, Natural Habitat & Indigenous Wildlife, Air Quality, Water Conservation, Energy Reduction, Green Purchasing, and Green Building/Renovation)
- Reactivated Club Earth (Deborah Dixon and Lance Sandberg, Faculty Advisers)
- Developed a VIVA VERDE logo for t-shirts, canvas bags, and awareness (campus and community)
- Created a Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! webpage for the college's website
- Hosted an Environmental Information Booth during PACfest
- Screened "An Inconvenient Truth" from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. (continuous loop) on Earth Day in the Student Center
- Crafted a Declaration of Environmental Sustainability that was signed by Dr. Ana "Cha" Guzman, the college's president

She then asked the subcommittees to "nail down" their green goals and objectives for this academic year by our next meeting on Oct. 2. (The meeting will take place at 1 p.m. instead of 2 p.m. so that more committee members are able to attend.) A Green Report Card will be published at the Fall 2009 Convocation, so we want to benchmark where we are now and set measurable goals for where we want to be by August 2009. Denise closed the meeting shortly after 3 p.m. and thanked the committee members for their continued involvement.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Barkis Richter, Ph.D.