

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info



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Holiday Donations: Your Magic Wand for Planetary Change!

Dear EcoGirl — I want to include green organizations in my holiday giving (and maybe get a year-end tax break too). What groups should I contribute to?
Signed, Generous in Guerneville

Dear Generous — What a smart question you ask! Yes, an essential way to help stop the ecological harm happening right now is by joining with others in taking constructive community-level action.

We're lucky that many groups near and far offer ways for us to collectively take on issues such as global warming, green energy, environmental health, sustainable economics, wise land use, and more. To support this work, group members read reports, attend meetings, uncover vital truths, hash out strategies, and identify effective actions. All this is usually done with shoestring budgets and donated skills. Yet how much worse would the world be without their efforts?

Giving even a small contribution to these groups (of money or time) can make a huge difference in their ability to take actions on the community's behalf. In return, you'll likely receive unexpected rewards, including camaraderie, a chance to use your talents, and a feeling of hope at seeing positive change in the world.

So, where do you start?

(1) Identify your passionate issue(s). What world problems do you most want to impact? What crises weigh on you, breaking your heart? In what arenas would you most delight at positive change? What solutions excite you?

If you haven't found your priority topic(s) yet, look at your current life passions, talk to others about theirs, and see what ideas emerge.

(2) Find group(s) taking constructive action on those issues. Look for possibilities online, at events, and by talking with friends and experts.

(3) Explore ways you can contribute to your chosen group(s). Do they offer memberships, request donations, publish a periodical, or sell products? Do they invite volunteers or have projects you'd like to support? Consider making a New Year's resolution to give a certain amount of money or time each month to the community groups you want to see succeed. Remember, action is the best cure for despair about our planet's woes!

Note: Donations to some groups are tax-deductible, but not all. Ask each group for their designation.

A few of my local favorites

Many groups are doing great work; here are some local ones that I especially value.

Action for the earth overall. Sonoma County Conservation Action (<www.conservationsaction.org> 571-8566), the county's largest environmental group, goes door-to-door to engage with people about key local issues. The **Sierra Club** (<www.redwood.sierraclub.org/sonoma> 544-7651) works for the environment both locally and nationally. Membership brings you their magazine, local newsletter, outings, and more. They also sell beautiful calendars. The **Sonoma County Conservation Council** (<www.envirocentersoco.org> 578-0595) gathers together information and groups at their Environmental Center. **Greenbelt Alliance** (<www.greenbelt.org> 823-2665) is a powerful advocate for the Bay Area's vibrant open spaces. For inspiration, check out **Daily Acts** (<www.daily-acts.org> 789-9664) and their Ripples Journal and Sustainability Tours.

Action on specific eco-topics. The nationally-recognized **Climate Protection Campaign** (<www.climateprotectioncampaign.org> 823-2665) is encouraging bold action to reduce Sonoma County's impact on the climate. Both the **Russian Riverkeeper** (<www.russianriverkeeper.org> 433-1958) and **Coastwalk** (<www.coastwalk.org> 829-6689) educate and act to protect our local waters. The **Sonoma Land Trust** (<www.sonomalandtrust.org> 526-6930) conserves land far into the future. Even athletes can come together for the earth through **OrganicAthlete** (<www.organicathlete.org> 360-8511).

Sustainable food and agriculture. To support small farms offering local fresh food, consider donating to the **Community Alliance with Family Farmers** (<www.caff.org> 824-1465). Also, the **Sonoma County Herb Association** (<www.sonomaherbs.org> 522-8500), and its Herb Exchange, encourage natural healing and sustainable herb farming, which is an ecological and economically-competitive alternative to wine monocropping.

Want more group leads? Search by category at the **Bay Area Progressive Directory** (<www.bapd.org>). You can also contact the **Volunteer Center of Sonoma County** (<www.volunteernow.org> 573-3399) for help finding volunteer opportunities that match your interests and skills.

I hope this sampling of the wonderful groups taking action inspires you to support your favorites in creating a better world for us all!

Hard-Earned Rewards



Eleanor Dominguez, WIA Participant
Joann Bacci, Ya-Ka-Ama Board Member
Patricia Galimba, WIA Participant
Sandy Smith, Ya-Ka-Ama Board Member
CJ Belleau, Ya-Ka-Ama WIA Program Manager
Eric Wilder, Ya-Ka-Ama Board Member
Guy Suetopka, Department of Labor Liaison
Nelson Pinola, Ya-Ka-Ama Board Chairperson

BY Sylvia WynnLindeman

On Thursday evening, November 29, 2007, Forestville's Ya-Ka-Ama Indian Education and Development Center honored three of its Workforce Investment Act (WIA) participants for having reached goals significant to their careers.

Santa Rosa residents Patricia Galimba and Eleanor Dominguez received Certificates of Achievement for having been accepted into cosmetology school and having earned the GED credential, respectively. Cotati resident Tyrone Smith received his Certificate of Achievement for having been accepted into Truck Driving Academy.

Refreshments were served and about twenty community and family members gathered to honor these individuals' hard work and achievements. In attendance were Ya-Ka-Ama Board Members Sandy Smith, Joanne Bacci, Eric Wilder and Chairperson Nelson Pinola; and the agency's Department of Labor (DOL) Liaison Guy Suetopka.

In addition to the pride the community takes in the three honoree's commitment to building their respective careers, this event marks a shift in the purpose of the Ya-Ka-Ama WIA program. Whereas in

the past, Ya-Ka-Ama was well known as a source of training designed to qualify its participants to work, the agency is now dedicated to actually placing participants in jobs that will satisfy their hearts, minds and souls as well as provide a steady source of income - for life.

If you are a Native American or Veteran who is unemployed or contemplating a career change, Ya-Ka-Ama will not only help you earn whatever qualifying credentials or experience your new career requires but will actively help you find a job in your field of interest. Ya-Ka-Ama serves native people and veterans who reside in Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Mendocino and Lake counties and will schedule evening appointments for people who work days or localized appointments for people who live out of the immediate area. Please call CJ at 707-887-1541 for more information and to schedule a conversation about your dreams and what you need to achieve them.

Conversely, if you are a business looking for sincere, well-trained workers and have or want to develop an intern, on-the-job training, or helper program, please call Sylvia at 707-887-1541.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of The Organic Guide, and Editor and Lead Writer for The Next STEP newsletter.

Email your questions about going green to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. View past columns at <www.AskEcoGirl.info>. Also contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical. "EcoGirl believes that we can all be superheroes for the planet. Then she shows you how!"

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Turn Trash Into Treasure

This holiday season be sure to pass along what you no longer need to those who can use it. For instance, for every dollar earned at The Salvation Army store (575-7320), 83¢ "goes directly to restoring lives" in their Adult Rehabilitation Center. You can donate clothes, furniture, appliances, bikes, household goods, toys, and cars. For other places to donate items for reuse, look at the Yellow Pages under Thrift Shops and Recycling, and see <www.recyclenow.org>. The latter two resources also give information about discarding waste responsibly, including those now supplanted techno-toys.

- Patricia Dines