



Acterra

EcoADVOCATE

ACTERRA:
ACTION FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

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NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

People are inspired by different things.

To some, sustainability means compact fluorescent light bulbs and making their home more energy efficient. To others, it means a different kind of bulb, planting natives and growing their own food. There is no right answer, whatever gets people to think about — and reduce — their impact on the earth, creates the momentum we need to heal our planet.

Acterra's programs are designed to teach and inspire people to make sustainable choices and create environmental leaders. By evolving our current programs and introducing our community to new ideas, we can touch people we have not in the past. This year we are excited about our new online resource **Find Answers**, our new **Urban Ecology** program that brings our deep knowledge of habitat restoration into our communities, and our new partnership with the City of Los Altos to restore the **Redwood Grove**. These programs allow Acterra to expand our reach and increase the momentum toward sustainability in our region.

We hope one day we will stop talking about green and sustainability, because that will be the norm. Until that day Acterra must continue to find new ways of inspiring people to live green, inside and out and everywhere in between.

Have a wonderful holiday season and we hope to see you often in 2010.

Michael Closson

GREEN GREEN

INSIDE



AND OUTSIDE

CONTACT US

Acterra

3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto CA 94303-4303

Directions at acterra.org/contact

650-962-9876 tel
650-962-8234 fax

www.acterra.org
info@acterra.org

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OUR MISSION

Acterra brings people together to create local solutions for a healthy planet.
For more information go to www.acterra.org

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Green@Home
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Business Environmental Awards
Environmental Resource Center
Climate Heroes

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Native Plant Nursery
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YOUR LEGACY AND ACTERRA'S FUTURE

You can provide a legacy that will keep your commitment to the environment alive well into the future — by including Acterra in your estate plan. A planned gift is not only a meaningful way to help sustain the community and the world in which we live; it may be beneficial to your family and heirs.

Planned giving supports Acterra while helping you achieve some of your personal, financial, and estate planning goals. You can make this gift most simply through a will or living trust — or you may wish to explore more complex planned giving instruments, such as life income gifts, that can provide a steady stream of income to you throughout your lifetime. Whether by bequest or other instrument, you will have the satisfaction of keeping your name and Acterra's future alive — granting future Peninsulans the gift of thoughtful and effective environmental programs.

We will be happy to provide you with additional information on making a gift to the future, and determine if this kind of gift is right for you and your family.

Contact Michael Closson at michaely@acterra.org.

Thank you.

URBAN ECOLOGY: ACTERRA'S NEW PROJECT BRINGS NATURE'S SERVICES TO THE CITY

BY CLAIRE ELLIOTT

Like all of Acterra's projects, our new Urban Ecology project hopes to inform and inspire people to take local actions for a healthy planet. While our Green@Home program focuses on the indoor environment, Urban Ecology will promote steps to "green" the outside spaces of homes and businesses — the urban landscape. Our intention is to bring nature back into the city. In addition to our traditional land stewardship work restoring degraded natural habitats, we want to re-create them — in people's yards, in public parks, on school grounds and on corporate campuses. Our goal is to show people how they can create beautiful drought-tolerant environments, featuring native and edible plants that attract beneficial insects and birds, and are pleasant places in which to spend time.



Male Anna's Hummingbird in flight

Acterra Stewardship staff's expertise in natural land habitat restoration translates easily to natural habitat creation in urban and suburban areas. Given the critical need for more native habitat in and around cities and the opportunity to use the creation of such habitat as an educational vehicle, we designed a new program to pursue this emerging field.

In true Acterra-style, we will involve youth and adult volunteers in each step of the process. The volunteers' emphasis may be less on public service and more on learning the skills to create and main-



Healthy Ecosystems make beautiful gardens!

tain these landscapes. We kicked off the project with our first workshop: "Bringing Life to Your Garden with Native Plants, Pollinators, and Birds". Speakers shared how they had attracted birds and beneficial insects to their gardens.

"If you build it, they will come" was conservationist Jim Howard's message in relating his experience converting his typical urban yard into a native habitat garden. By selecting locally-native plants that "coevolved" with local wildlife and carefully placing water features in his garden, he increased the variety of native bird life visiting his yard from 3 to 32 species.

Jim installed several species of plants from Acterra's nursery, providing food and habitat for birds that add interest to the garden and provide a variety of services: Hummingbirds to pollinate, Phoebes to control flying insects, and even a top predator regularly visits — a Sharp-Shinned hawk.

Jim's efforts also reduced water use — which has many benefits. Saving water re-

We are using our experience in land restoration to teach and inspire people to create healthy ecosystems in their yards, parks, schools and corporate campuses.

duces diversions from Sierra rivers providing habitat for wildlife and fish such as salmon and trout, and improving water quality in the San Francisco Bay. Saving water also reduces our "carbon footprint:" nearly one fifth of California's energy consumption is used for transporting and treating water.

Hardscaping in Jim's landscape was also "earth-friendly." Jim and his wife cut the concrete slabs already present in his yard into paving stones to create attractive and more permeable pathways and they used pieces to build walls around garden beds. This effort meant he was not importing materials from a habitat-destroying quarry, nor was he transporting his concrete for offsite handling. In addition, he saved trees by using recycled lumber in building an attractive gate and an outdoor shower.

Another speaker at the workshop, Jaime Pawelek from UC Berkeley, shared fascinating stories of native bees and the gardens they visit. Her UC Berkeley team has been studying native bees in

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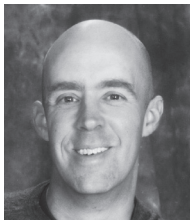
NOTABLES

Paul Heiple is Acterra Stewardships' Staff Botanist. His interest in plants goes back as far as he can remember, and his experience is extensive. In addition to his work at Acterra, he is



the California Native Plant Society Santa Clara Valley Chapter treasurer, Co-chair of the San Mateo County Weed Management Area, chair of the Portola Valley Conservation Committee, head Friday weeder at Edgewood County Park and an associate at Jasper Ridge where he works in the herbarium.

William Mutch is the Chief Steward of the Enid Pearson Arastradero Preserve. William's background includes permaculture design and consultation and environmental education. He is excited to bring together permaculture and restoration ecology, combining both to help slow climate change, while teaching people how they can apply these techniques in their own lives.



Carolyn Spitz joined the Green@Home team as the Volunteer and Training Coordinator on October 12th. Carolyn already has a lot of experience with the program: she was a HouseCall volunteer for its pilot program in 2007, has helped with



scheduling and follow-up calls and created the Green@Home training manual. Carolyn worked in Education Services at Hewlett

Packard for a number of years before leaving to focus her energies on solving environmental issues including mentoring a high school green team. Carolyn is an avid gardener and native plant enthusiast and loves to spend time walking in the Baylands.

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urban areas for many years and publicizing their findings online: <http://nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens/>

When people think of "green" homes they often think of energy and water conservation and the

"cradle to grave" impacts of the materials used in construction. These same issues are important to consider in our residential landscapes as well.

We need to ask questions about the resources we use. For instance, considering water use, ask: how much am I using, where does it come from, how is it treated, and where does it go? How can my use of water protect the resource and reduce our impacts?

Our October workshop helped answer some of these questions about water. Instead of sprinkling with imported, treated water, which often results in some of the chlorinated water flowing through storm drains and into creeks, we can learn to capture better quality rain water (without chlorine that harms soil biota) and use it for landscape irrigation.

In addition to saving water, use of rain-water has another benefit. Downspouts from a typical home in the area add over 20,000 gallons of water to our storm water flow, increasing the potential for flooding. Capturing this water onsite, even for a short time, can reduce that peak flow and the floods that result.

Our water-harvesting workshop included hands-on training on installing a rain barrel and using earthworks to capture water. In this workshop, participants layed out swale-and-berm systems for capturing runoff, and built a rain barrel system for collecting rain from one of the buildings at the Arastradero Gateway facility.



Photo: Matt Montagne

Workshop topics we plan to cover in the future include hands-on lawn replacement, choice and care of native trees, nuts and bolts of designing earth friendly landscapes, and selecting plants for the right spot to provide blooms throughout the year. We hope to see you at one of these workshops, or at volunteer events that we will be posting soon on our website!

Claire Elliott is Acterra's Stewardship Director.

GIVE AN ACTERRA GIFT MEMBERSHIP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.

Introduce a friend, colleague or family member to Acterra! When you give an Acterra gift membership, the recipient receives a beautiful handwritten card letting them know of your generosity and the opportunity to choose a wonderful gift from a selection of green items and events on our website.

To find out more about the gifts we are currently offering, go to www.acterra.org/gifts or contact Laura Stec at lauras@acterra.org or 650.962.9876 ext. 346.

This is a great way to increase your support for Acterra's mission of creating local solutions for a healthy planet.

Happy Holidays!

ACTERRA BECOMES STEWARD OF LOS ALTOS' REDWOOD GROVE

BY MICHAEL CLOSSON

On September 30, Acterra signed a contract with the City of Los Altos to provide habitat restoration services at the city's Redwood Grove nature preserve.

Redwood Grove is a beautiful 5.7-acre park located on a stretch of Adobe Creek in the heart of Los Altos.

Although it is relatively small, the park boasts a number of distinct ecosystems including the redwoods, oak woodland, grassland and the riparian corridor.

However, the park's ecosystem is seriously degraded, overgrown with invasive plants that crowd out and sometimes overwhelm native plants — and even trees, in the case of ivy — thereby destroying habitat for native animals and plants. In addition, sections of the creek bank — particularly around the grove of redwoods — are undercut and badly eroded.

Acterra's goal is to restore the park's ecosystem to health. As is the case with our restoration work at Palo Alto's Pearson Arastradero Preserve and in the San Francisco Creek watershed, we will deploy hundreds of local volunteers — youth and adults — to spearhead the habitat restoration process.

Volunteers from the community will be used to remove invasive plants, install native plants from Acterra's Native Plant Nursery, help us repair damaged creek banks, and create habitat — such as bird



Redwood Grove

Photo: City of Los Altos

houses and brush piles — for native wildlife. In the process of restoring Redwood Grove to health, Acterra's staff will educate participating youth and adults about the park's wildlife and ecosystem. We will organize interpretive programs including workshops, presentations and walks, install signage and involve volunteers in creating native plant gardens to attract birds, butterflies and native bees.

For further information about this project, contact Claire Elliott, Acterra's Stewardship Program Director, at clairee@acterra.org

Michael Closson is Acterra's Executive Director.

NOTABLES *continued*

Wako Takayama did an analysis of the Green@Home program, through surveys, interviews and focus groups and put together a presentation outlining the strengths and opportunities of the program. Many of her recommendations have been implemented and it has been very helpful to have this in-depth and objective perspective. Thanks, Wako!

Thomas Kuhnle joined Acterra's board bringing his long-standing commitment to the environment. He interned for the National Audubon Society and American Farmland Trust in Washington, D.C., worked for Natural Resources Defense Council and worked on a year-long study on California water resource issues funded through Stanford University's Center for Economic Policy Research. Tom also served as the President of the Environmental Law Society and Editor-in-Chief of the Stanford Environmental Law Journal.

Alexandra Von Feldt joined Acterra's board and has been helping with the Acterra Stewardship strategic planning process. Alexandra was the Co-Chair for Portola Valley Friends of Sausal Creek, which advocated and fundraised for the Sausal Creek restoration project. She has served on the Town of Portola Valley's Conservation Committee and Architecture and Site Control Commission and is currently on the Planning Commission.

Peter Neal, Fred Nichols, Marilyn Gallaway, Bill Lean and Dorothy Hinze are long-term, regular volunteers whose help keeps Acterra's Native Plant Nursery producing thousands of beautiful, healthy, locally-specific native plants. Newer volunteers, Marion, Pete and Dave are a big help too. Thank you, nursery crew!

Tom Carlino and Steve Haas are Acterra's most devoted Weed Warriors at the Enid Pearson Arastradero Preserve! These two work tirelessly most Wednesdays with our staff botanist, Paul Heiple, to remove invasive and sometimes painfully-spiky plants such as Yellow Star Thistle that are crowding out the native plants that are so important to local wildlife. We appreciate you, Tom and Steve!

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IN SEARCH OF VAMPIRES

BY MERIJANE LEE

We live in a world of energy-sucking vampires. Not the teenage kind imported from Transylvania — but the kind stamped “Made in China,” Japan, Mexico, or USA. These vampires are part of the real world, devices that draw electricity even when they appear to be turned off.



Even before these tough economic times, I developed the habit of unplugging everything when not in use. But with iPods, cell phones, and rechargeable devices dominating our lives, plugging and unplugging my kids' equipment was a constant nagging task. Enough, I said. I know I have vampires. What are they costing me? I went vampire-hunting.

For this exercise, a wooden stake would not do. Instead, I traveled to the PG&E Energy Center in San Francisco and borrowed a meter called a Line Logger. By plugging the logger into a wall outlet, and then plugging a consumer device into the logger, I could measure the number of watts used by the device.

I didn't measure the big appliances, such as the refrigerator or washing machine and I couldn't measure anything hard-wired, such as light fixtures. So I focused on all the technology and entertainment devices in the house — computers, TVs, DVD players, iPods, cable boxes, the list goes on. Trudging from room to room of my house, connecting and disconnecting devices, I found an even more insidious parasite; I was looking for vampires and discovered instead super-vampires.

To be entertained 24x7 we center our home lives around energy vampires. These monsters are always on, and they feed on about 30 watts — \$3 per month

— each. The monsters are the Motorola HDTV cable box with DVR and my beloved Series 2 Tivo. I can't unplug the cable box or it loses track of the programming schedule and takes 20 minutes to rebuild it. I can't unplug the DVRs, because, well darn, that's what a DVR is for — to stay on all the time and record stuff I can't remember to do myself. So all of these blood suckers are always on — they are constantly, well, sucking.

But back to the other entertainment vampires, such as my stereo at \$1.70, the Wii at \$0.95, Hitachi big screen 40" TV at \$1.14, and my little 9" JVC TV at \$.75 per month. Desktop computers, wireless routers, answering machines with cordless phones, powered speakers, and the like consume 4-10 watts while off, which translates to 38 to 95 cents per month per device.

The Senseo I use to make a cup of coffee uses no watts when plugged in. But when heating the water to brew, it draws 1340 watts. After brewing, it cycles between 2 and 40 watts every few seconds to keep the tank ready for the next cup. So now I know to turn the Senseo off as soon as it has brewed my cup.

TVs and computer monitors draw much more power when they are displaying bright colored images, but little when they are mostly black. So use a small dark screen saver and not one that looks like a color test.

Adding everything up, vampires and entertainment monsters are costing me \$22.71 per month (based on PG&E's second tier rate of \$0.13142 per KWh). My top 10 offenders make up \$17.22 of that.

Bill Pottinger at the PG&E Energy Center says consumers can now easily buy their own power meters. For around \$30 you can buy a Kill A Watt™ meter made by P3 International. After neutralizing the vampires, most people will recoup the cost of the meter immediately.

"Adding everything up, vampires and entertainment monsters are costing me \$22.71 per month."

Or, since you'll probably only use it for one week and never again, loan yours to another vampire killer. Some cities and libraries have begun to make power meters available to their residents on loan. Check with your city!



A Kill A Watt™ meter in action.

Photo: Michael Allen

Another way to reduce the amount of blood that vampires suck out of your household budget? Bill Pottinger suggests that you plug multiple vampires into a power strip that you then turn off when not in use.

Merijane Lee is a retired software development manager and does volunteer work for AARP, the IRS Taxpayer Advocacy Panel, and the Town of Portola Valley. She also plays and referees soccer.

JOBTRAIN YOUTH ADD ENERGY TO ACTERRA'S PROGRAMS

BY DEBBIE MYTELS AND LIZ MUIR

This summer saw a new group of young people bounding up the stairs to Acterra's offices as we hosted a group of 17- to 24-year old trainees from JobTrain, an employment training non-profit in East Menlo Park. Formerly called OICW, JobTrain has a long and successful history of helping people acquire job skills and subsequent employment.



Samnit Kumar from Jobtrain, checking tire pressure during a Green@Home Housecall.

Utilizing funds from the federal stimulus package (ARRA — the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009), JobTrain's Youth Star program put 100 young people to work at summer jobs — and Acterra's Green@Home program was one of several local organizations where these youth were employed.

Starting in mid-June, we enrolled 10 JobTrain youth in a week-long, 12-hour version of our Green@Home training program. They learned the basics on climate change, energy conservation concepts, and some simple "handyperson" skills from reading a thermometer to adding faucet aerators!

"Job readiness" was also a part of our training. Some of the trainees had challenges with arriving on time, for example. Sometimes this was due to problems with getting a ride to Acterra's office — and sometimes due to personal factors. (Not having good public transportation near our location is certainly another challenge!) Another part of our goal was to help these young people see that the

skills we presented could lead to eventual employment.

After their week of training, we put these youth to work on community outreach and performing HouseCalls. While a number of the youth dropped out during the course of the summer due to family reasons, transportation challenges or to start school, several continued working with Acterra through the end of JobTrain's program funding on September 30.

"I never really thought about going green and I didn't know anything about green jobs," said Samnit Kumar, one of the JobTrain trainees. "Green@Home taught me how to make a home more energy efficient. I liked doing HouseCalls because each one was different and the residents were really interested in what we were doing."

Debbie Mytels is Acterra's Associate Director of Programs and Liz Muir is the Green@Home Program Coordinator.

NOTABLES *continued*

271 volunteers came to Acterra Stewardship's California Coastal Clean-up Day's Menlo Park site on September 19. They collected 4160 lbs. of trash and 480 lbs. of recyclables along six miles of creek/shoreline. Thank you to all who came out!

Judith Weiss is providing invaluable volunteer assistance to Acterra as our "Development Associate." In that capacity, Judith is researching foundations and companies to determine if their funding criteria match up with Acterra's program. In addition, she is crafting Letters of Inquiry and funding proposals to those that appear to have priorities similar to Acterra's. Thanks Judith!

Frances Ferrell is a *Be the Change* alum (class of '09) who started and managed Acterra's Climate Heroes program as her project. Last April Frances organized a comedy show, "The Battle for Earth Begins with Laughter: Choose Your Side", in San Francisco, and all proceeds were donated to Acterra. In addition, she serves as a volunteer at many Acterra events and gives talks on behalf of *Be the Change*. Thank you, Frances, for all your work and creative ideas!

Lynn Strand, a *Be the Change* alum (class of '08), has donated her consulting services to develop marketing and fundraising strategies for BTC. She is president of Positive Impact Partner, a marketing firm focused on creating positive results for businesses and humanity. We appreciate your help!

Elliott Wright is a *Be the Change* alum ('09), whose project involved the development of a pedicab fleet to address the problem of getting public transit riders to their final destination. The project has now become a business and Elliott frequently donates his time (and pedicabs) to promote Acterra. Thanks!

Susan Wright, *Be the Change* alum ('09), is currently, with another *Be the Change* graduate **Lauren Swezey**, forming a Santa Clara/San Mateo version of Connect the Dots, to help nonprofits green their operations. Susan has also devoted time to promoting *Be the Change* by speaking at its events and identifying tabling opportunities. Thank you!

GOT QUESTIONS? FIND ANSWERS!

BY PAT MARTIN

“Is there an environmentally-friendly way of getting rid of termites?”

“I have a lot of fabric remnants.

Is there any place that will use them?”

“Where can I find ‘green’ job opportunities?”

Got questions? Apparently you do, as Acterra staff are fielding environmental and “green” questions like these on a daily basis! Given the demand for information and answers, Acterra created a new online resource for everybody to use — “Find Answers!”

The internet has a plethora of websites that contain news, information, and resources covering every environmental topic — from sustainable geopolitical action to keeping a “green” pet. Realizing that searching for environmental answers can be confusing for even the most hard-core environmentalist, Acterra staff put together a webpage — organized by environmental topic — that links users to websites that Acterra staff and other environmental groups have found to be reliable sources of information and contain local news and resources.

People always have questions that we have not thought of which is why we created “Ask an Expert!” Acterra invited local experts



on a diversity of topics to answer questions sent by the public. To ask a question, all a user needs to do is visit the “Ask an Expert” webpage (www.acterra.org/findanswers/expert.html), and enter a question. Debbie Mytels, Acterra’s Associate Director of Programs and head “Expert,” will either respond to the question, or route it to a more appropriate expert for follow-up.

But Wait! We Need Your Help!

Although “Find Answers” offers a diversity of great resources, we need your help to make it an even more helpful and informative site. Acterra members have a vast, in-depth knowledge of environmental resources and information. So, if you know of websites that would be an asset to the “Find Answers” site, if you’d like to see new topics added or if you would like to become one of our experts, please let us know. On each page of “Find Answers” is a section where you can “Help Us Become an Even Better Resource.” Simply submit your recommendations and we’ll take it from there! It’s just that easy!

Pat Martin is Acterra’s Public Information Coordinator and loves tough questions!

**APPLICATIONS FOR
THE 2010 BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS
ARE NOW AVAILABLE.**

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION
IS JANUARY 22, 2010.**



Since 1990, Acterra's Business Environmental Awards have recognized outstanding environmental achievements in the Bay Area business community.

To view videos of the 2009 award winners’ programs, go to www.acterra.org/BEA.

For more information or to become a sponsor, please contact Ariane Erickson, Awards Program director at awards@acterra.org.

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3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto CA 94303-4303

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