



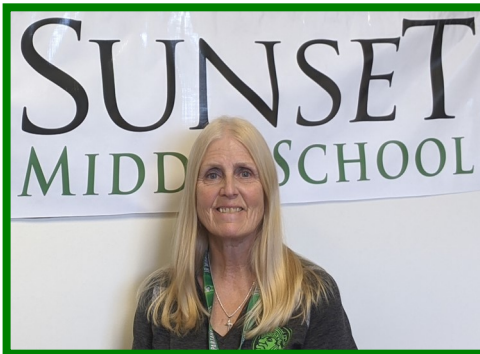
# GREEN STAR SCHOOLS® NEWS

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As this unprecedented year comes to a close, we have the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Green Star Schools® and the people that work in them. **This year, Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley School Districts were jointly awarded for Outstanding Outreach by Recycle Colorado. Through participation in the Green Star Schools program, both school districts are among the first in the nation to move toward zero waste. [Congratulations Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley School Districts on this much deserved award!](#)**

In this *Green Star Schools News*, we will highlight several Green Star Schools staff. Featured are a few of the school custodians whose work is so vital to the program's success. Custodial teams work hard to maintain a safe and clean learning environment for students and school staff. This year everyone is even more acutely aware of their vital work. Also featured is the Boulder High art teacher that piloted our newest Zero Waste project, *ReCreate*. I hope you enjoy this opportunity to get to know just a few of the folks that do so much in our schools each and every day.

*Wishing you all a rejuvenating and wonderful winter break! Kim*



### MEET VI MCHUGH

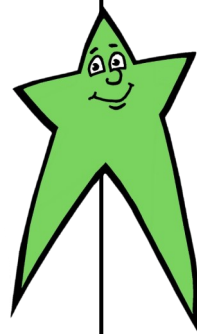
Vi McHugh is the head custodian at Sunset Middle School in Longmont. Vi started her career with SVVSD 25 years ago and has been the head

custodian at Sunset Middle School (SMS) for seven years. Under Vi's supervision, SMS became a Green Star School in the fall of 2017. Vi finds recycling in schools to be a very beneficial feature of Green Star Schools.

All work comes with challenges. In Vi's opinion, one of the most challenging aspects of her work is winter weather in Colorado. On a snowy school day, Vi leaves her home around 4:30am to be at school by 5:00am. When it snows, she completes all the regular tasks inside the school *AND* ensures all the outside walks are clear and safe. All of these tasks are completed before over 400 students and staff enter the building when the first bell rings. Similar to winter weather, COVID-19 places an added burden on Vi and her evening custodians, Hector and Jose. They are working continually to clean and disinfect everything at SMS.

Outside of work, Vi enjoys hiking, biking and reading. She even practices waste reduction at home by recycling and composting. Vi's family includes two grown daughters, an 11-year-old granddaughter, a 10-year-old Mastiff and a 12-year-old Chihuahua!

Vi explained "the most rewarding part of my job is interacting with the wonderful staff and students here at Sunset Middle school," and "Hector, Jose, and I are proud to provide a safe and clean learning environment for them."



### INTRODUCING ALONSO MARTINEZ

During his nine-year career with BVSD, Alonso Martinez has the distinction of having been a head custodian at two Green Star Schools, Sanchez and University Hill Elementary Schools. Alonso believes that students learning to recycle and compost is the benefit of the Green Star Schools program. He also appreciates the support of the night crew at his current school, University Hill Elementary. The challenges COVID brings makes Alonso even more appreciative of their hard work.

Alonso disclosed, "the hardest part of my job is trying to keep the school to my standards and safe for everyone." Maintaining a school during COVID means he must prioritize more tasks, including more disinfecting throughout the building. If a student or staff member reports COVID symptoms, his crew has to disinfect that space while also trying to minimize their own exposure.

University Hill was established in 1906! Working at a building with that much history can pose some challenges too. Winter weather can freeze water in those historic walls, leading to water damage when temperatures warm. Alonso has two sons and two daughters ranging in age from 3 to 14. University Hill is a family affair for Alonso, as his two daughters are also students there. (There is no pulling the wool over this Dad's eyes!) Detailing cars is a relaxing hobby that Alonso enjoys when he is not working. As a family, they enjoy movies and vacationing in beach towns, including Miami Beach.

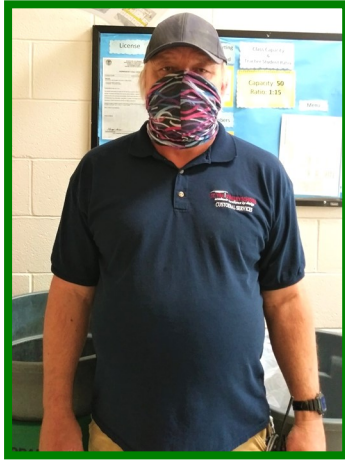


**GET TO KNOW LARRY FANNING**

On workdays for the past six years “Mr. Larry”, can be found at Mountain View Elementary (MVE). The Green Star Schools program came to MVE two years ago under Larry’s supervision. Larry feels the biggest benefit of the Green Star Schools program is watching the kids learn how to sort compost and recycling on their own, helping them gain new habits.

After 20 years with SVVSD, Larry finds the greatest challenge of his job is shoveling snow. When snow falls, snow removal begins at 5:30am! Of course, COVID has added daily challenges at a school with over 300 students and staff. According to Larry, “we were disinfecting all the time, but even more so now.” He admits he finds working all day while wearing a mask uncomfortable, but he is happy to do so to protect everyone in the school.

Larry enjoys spending time with his cat Sophie, his two sons, two grandsons and one granddaughter. One of his favorite vacations was a family trip to Austin. Despite the humidity in the Lone Star State, he enjoyed seeing the sights, including Texas-sized cattle. Almost every night of the week you can find Larry enjoying a game of checkers with his best friend at Ziggi’s in Longmont. “Mr. Larry” has shared his love and knowledge of checkers with students as well. After sharing his checker secrets, Mr. Larry is known to joke with students, requesting that they “forget what I showed you!” The most rewarding part of being the head custodian at MVE, is interacting with the students, talking with them, watching them learn and seeing them smile.



**INTRODUCING ELMA SABIC**

According to Elma Sabic, the head custodian at Centennial Middle School (CMS), “Seeing the kids and adults doing their part to save our planet by following the program and composting, recycling and landfilling correctly,” is the most beneficial aspect of the Green Star Schools Program. Elma began working at CMS in 2014. She was part of the school team when CMS became a Green Star School in the spring of 2016.

As you can imagine, there is never a dull moment at a middle school with over 600 students. Having worked for Boulder Valley School District for seven years, Elma finds the hardest part of her job is stopping when she does not have enough time in the day to finish a task. Over the years, Elma has learned to allow herself to complete a task the next day or pass it on to a teammate. COVID compounds the challenges she and her team face as they are disinfecting the building “like crazy” to keep the school clean, and everyone in it, healthy.



Elma lived in Bosnia before the Red Cross moved her family to Colorado in 1994 to escape the war. When at home, Elma enjoys spending time laughing and eating with her family and friends. While she does not currently have a pet, she hopes to add a husky to her family soon. Elma and her family also enjoy camping in their favorite spot at Lake McConaughy State Recreation Area in Nebraska and fishing at Pine Lake. One of the most rewarding and enjoyable things for Elma at CMS is seeing the smiling faces of students, even if they are hiding behind masks these days!

**REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE & ReCreate!**

For 15 years, the art studio at Boulder High School has been a home away from home for Kate Villareal. Over her 24-year career, Kate has taught *AVID*, *Foundations in Art*, *Studio Arts*, *Photography*, and *Pottery & Sculpture*. Teaching during a pandemic requires extra creativity. She must teach what is traditionally a very hands-on subject, remotely. During the first semester, Kate has worked hard to keep her students on task. Gathering and distributing art supplies during COVID is also a challenge.

**Introducing ReCreate!** Eco-Cycle’s *ReCreate* project offers used books to middle and high school Green Star Schools® art teachers and students for Earth-friendly, free art materials! Students reuse and *ReCreate* new art using old books. The used books were recycled at the [Eco-Cycle/City of Boulder Center for Hard-to-Recycle Materials \(CHaRM\)](#).

**Students ReCreate!** Kate’s students work primarily in clay with a final mixed media project. This year Kate chose *ReCreate!* The project came to life despite the fact that students were learning from home. By the time the quarter came to an end and projects were complete, many students felt that *ReCreate* was their favorite assignment!

Before beginning the final project, students watched a 12-minute, educational video by Eco-Cycle which explains the history of paper, its influence on art, the benefits of proper recycling and composting paper, and an introduction to *ReCreate*. According to Kate, the video “brought home a broader scope of why we are doing this.” Reusing books to create art (instead of using paper from trees) reduces habitat loss, saves natural resources, and reduces air and water pollution.

Two samples of completed projects are pictured here. *ReCreate* art will be exhibited in a virtual art exhibit for Earth Day in April 2021. Middle and high school art teachers interested in participating are encouraged to contact Kim Orr, Eco-Cycle’s Green Star Schools Program Manager. **For more information or to enroll, contact [kim@ecocycle.org](mailto:kim@ecocycle.org) or 303-444-6634 ext 118.**

