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For Immediate Release

TTUSD schools save energy—Truckee Elementary Goes Green

Kings Beach and Tahoe Lake Get Green Teams

(Truckee, Calif.) September 18, 2012—At a time when saving money is critical for the district, data shows that all eight of Tahoe Truckee Unified School District's (TTUSD) schools have cut down significantly on energy consumption since conservation efforts were first targeted in 2008, according to Anna Klovstad, C.E.M./Project Manager for the TTUSD Facilities Department. Glenshire Elementary School led the district with a 25% decrease in energy consumption between 2008 and 2011, followed by Kings Beach Elementary School, Alder Creek Middle School, and Donner Trail Elementary School, all with about a 19% decrease in energy consumption. Putting percentages into dollar amounts, the district now spends a third less on gas and electricity, reducing the district's annual costs from more than \$1.2 million per year to just over \$800,000 per year. But saving money is only one benefit of the district's conservation goals. "We are in the business of education, so this is an opportunity to educate our students and staff on energy conservation and sustainability affecting our district, our community, and ultimately the environment." said Klovstad.

Cafeteria Waste Significantly Reduced

In addition to energy conservation, the district has made significant recycling and waste reduction efforts with the help of faculty, student, and community collaboration. Last year North Tahoe School (NTS) teacher Paula Bossler, who teaches an environmental science elective class, teamed up with Klovstad to implement a more extensive recycling and waste reduction program at NTS. The group reached out to the community for support, enlisting the help of Missy Mohler of Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships, who also directs the successful Envirolution club and program at Truckee High School. Local business owner Joanna Walters of Sierra Cost Management also joined the effort.

Bossler's students conducted a week-long study on recycling and waste patterns in the cafeteria at NTS. As a result of their findings, Styrofoam was eliminated entirely district-wide and reusable lunch trays replaced all disposable lunch trays in the elementary schools. A cost analysis showed that the reusable lunch trays paid for themselves in only 80 days of use, along with decreasing the district's landfill contribution. Thanks to the Nature Fund grant from the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, adult portion reusable lunch trays were tested last year at Alder Creek Middle School with the goal of getting them into the high schools as well.

Truckee Elementary Goes Green Thanks to Shane McConkey Foundation

Now Kings Beach and Tahoe Lake both have Green Teams thanks to SMF. Both sites had booths at Earth Day and have done many other great projects at their sites. Additionally, Glenshire has EcoKids – a program that was started by Stephanie Bacon and is flourishing.

Thanks to a grant from the Shane McConkey Foundation and a matching grant raised by the Truckee Elementary PTO along with help from Canopy Strategies, SWEP, TTCF, and countless volunteer hours to implement the program, Truckee Elementary is the flagship school furthering the greening efforts of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

Two years ago, the PTO and TTUSD started brainstorming ways to improve the school's sustainability and reduce consumption. In September 2011, the Shane McConkey Foundation gave \$20,000 to TTUSD to put its schools on a path toward sustainability and environmental responsibility. Sherry McConkey, who created the foundation following her husband Shane's death in 2009, saw investment in local schools as an effective way to bring Shane's legacy to the next generation, by instilling in students the sense of respect and appreciation for the environment that he had.

Truckee Elementary students, staff, parents, TTUSD, and the community are rallying around the effort. Valerie Simpson, Truckee Elementary School Principal, said that the project has created a synchronicity that they were looking for. The PTO really wanted to contribute to a lasting project that would enhance Truckee Elementary's educational experience. Simpson said that ultimately she would like this to lead to an environmental studies focus for the school. They have already set up a partnership with help from Missy Mohler at SWEP and the Truckee High School Envirolution Club. Simpson said that Truckee Elementary students are excited to be part of the greening team effort. She noted that a group of 5th graders had committed to giving up their lunch period once a week to find ways to create a no lunch waste environment. The school even has its own composting program. According to Walters, "The 5th grade students are also responsible for collecting all the paper recycling from classrooms every week. This effort alone has diverted about 16 tons of the landfill and contributed to savings of nearly \$4,000."

Unfortunately, the 2012/2013 has started with a deterrent to the landfill savings due to illegal dumping of household trash in the dumpsters. The problem at Truckee Elementary and other district schools is so bad that the district has had to invest in security cameras to try to curb the illegal dumping. Said Klovstad, "I hope that anyone who feels the need to dump their trash at school dumpsters will stop when they consider that their actions can affect the school budget, thereby negatively impacting students."

Back to the positives, Klovstad said that Truckee Elementary participating as a green team school is a great opportunity to further the district's goals of creating a culture of sustainability. "We have the inspiration from students, support from faculty, parents, and the community, and the funding to test new products and processes at Truckee Elementary. We'll be able to use the feedback of an enthusiastic group as a model to help us implement energy conservation and waste reduction practices throughout the district."

Speaking to the district's overall conservation and waste reduction efforts, Dr. Rob Leri said, "This is an impressive body of work in terms of the efforts that are going on in the school district for conservation and energy savings. Not only does it help to educate students and instill a culture of conservation, but the bottom line is that the savings goes back to the district budget."

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Photo: Some of Truckee Elementary's 2011/2012 5th Grade Green Team, measuring composting materials that they had sorted. Photo courtesy of Alex Herrera.

Provided by Switchback PR + Marketing on behalf of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.