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Riviera Elementary Uses Trash-Free Lunch Challenge Prize to Do More Good

by lacarguy

In 2013 LAcarGUY and Grades of Green through the **Trash-Free Lunch Challenge** and beckoned students from 16 different schools to try to reduce their waste while furthering education efforts. Since that challenge the winning school, Riviera Elementary, has been **putting the prize money to good use** making their school even more environmentally friendly. They also went on to have a contest of their own, which resulted in a very cool mural made from a unique material, that should be recycled far more often than it is.



About the Trash-Free Lunch Challenge In a partnership with Grades of Green, LAcarGUY started the Trash-Free Lunch Challenge to help reduce waste and teach students about eco-friendly habits. The contest was successful in educating students how to reduce their waste, reuse what they can, recycle everything else and finally to recover energy from unusable products. It also drastically reduced lunchtime waste, (by as much as 70% in some schools).

Riviera Elementary Efforts for a More Sustainable School After Allison Cohen, a parent of one of the children at Riviera Elementary, noticed just how much waste the school was producing at lunch time every day, she knew that something had to be done. She quickly formed “the Green Team” an organization of more than 35 different students to try and improve the health and sustainability of the school. Thanks to the Green Team as well as the prize money from the Trash-Free Lunch Challenge Riviera Elementary was able to pay to switch from Styrofoam trays to a compostable alternative at lunch time. They also setup permanent sorting stations for recyclables around the school collecting everything from typical recyclables, to compost, liquids and even unopened food. The simple sorting station was able to lower landfill trash from 12 bags a day down to two. Just these two actions should help Riviera remove a high amount of waste from their community and they set a good example for the rest of the community, and other schools to follow along with.

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A Creative Reminder to Recycle The school also held a contest to see what classroom could collect the most bottle caps. By the end of the contest the school amassed more than 400 lbs. of material

that would have ended up in a landfill. All of this was put to use to construct a mural to the school and to make a statement about recycling. Lexi Rampolla, a 5th grader at Riviera, came up with the design of the mural and students and adults came together to put the project together using paint, plywood, and hardware donated by a local Lowes. The finished product serves as an impressive reminder to avoid waste whenever possible. The mural was unveiled at a school-wide assembly and is now being displayed at the school to inspire students, staff members and visitors to be environmentally conscious, and should do so for years to come.

About Grades of Green Grades of Green is a non-profit focused on environmental education. Their mission is to teach students from kindergarten up through 12th grade about the importance of reducing waste and reusing materials whenever possible. Not only do they sponsor or put together competitions such as the Trash-Free Lunch Challenge, but they also take their time to educate children whenever they can. Their work is helping to build more environmentally-conscious citizens and a brighter future for our country.

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