

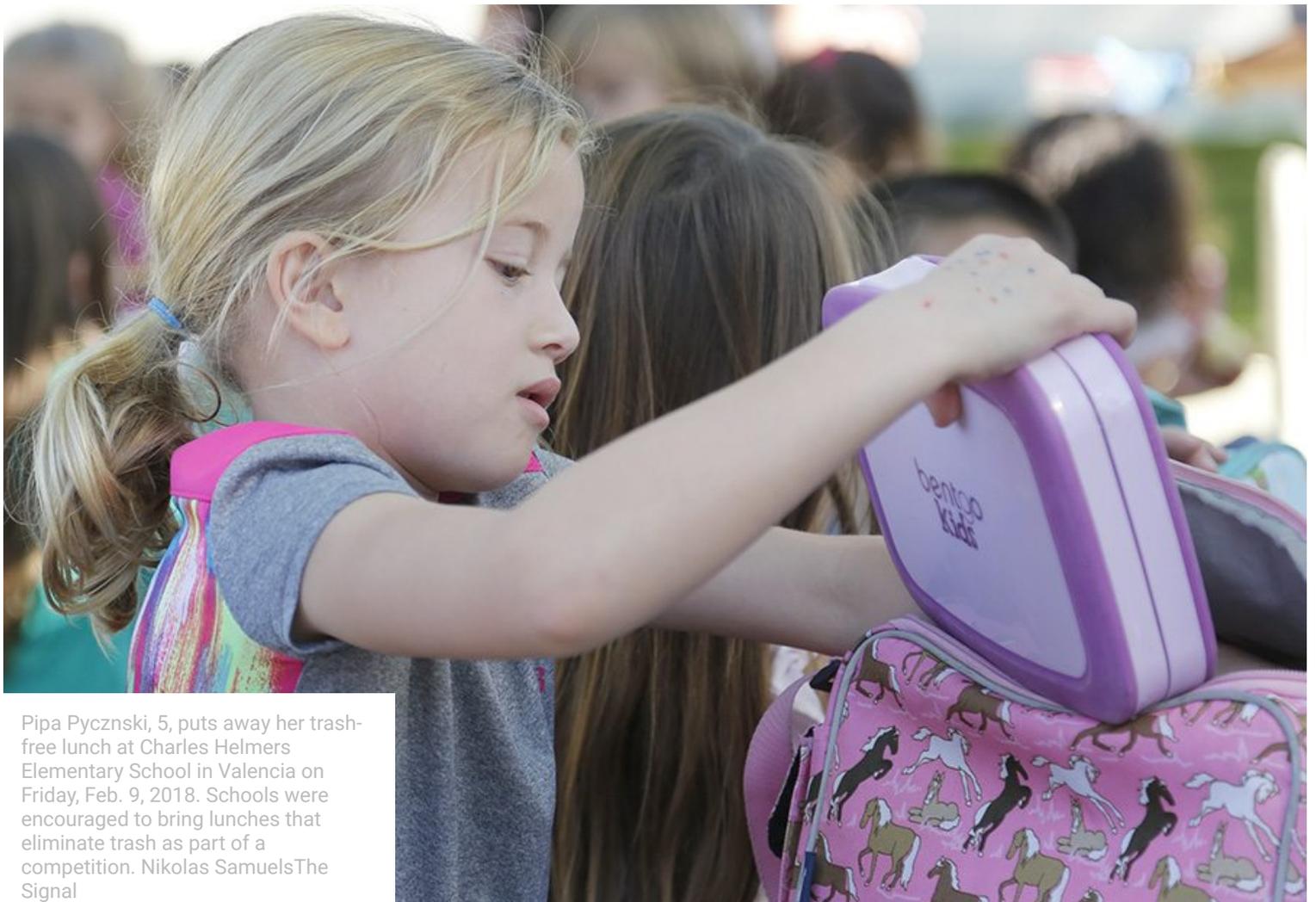
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Pipa Pycznski, 5, puts away her trash-free lunch at Charles Helmers Elementary School in Valencia on Friday, Feb. 9, 2018. Schools were encouraged to bring lunches that eliminate trash as part of a competition. Nikolas SamuelsThe Signal



Saugus schools succeed in Trash Free Lunch Challenge

🕒 March 26, 2018, 3:34 pm 💬 0 Comments 👤 Christina Cox

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Two Saugus Union School District schools, Charles Helmers Elementary and Skyblue Mesa Elementary, received recognition for their participation and performance in the Grades of Green seventh annual Trash Free Lunch Challenge.

Charles Helmers was selected as one of three elementary school finalists for the challenge and Skyblue Mesa received the “Community Activists” special award.

During the Trash Free Lunch [Challenge](#), participating schools compete against each other to see which one could reduce the most lunchtime waste.

Student leaders also spend the school year educating others about waste reduction and encouraging their peers to bring reusable lunch containers to school and to use lunchtime sorting stations for donation, compost, liquids, waste and recyclables.

Grades of Green also provides each school with a personalized advisor, leadership training webinars for student leaders, an educational assembly, an eco-starter kit and a customized waste-reduction plan.

In total this year, the 20 participating schools in the greater Los Angeles area diverted 463 tons of waste, or 46,300 bags of trash, from local landfills and educated more than 13,000 students on waste reduction.

“We are so impressed with the student leadership at our Trash Free Lunch Challenge schools,” said Allie Bussjaeger, Grades of Green’s director of regional programs. “These students have gone above and beyond to inspire their campus communities to reduce waste. From delivering classroom presentations, to hosting grade level competitions, to making educational videos, these students are making waste reduction easy and fun.”

As one of three elementary school finalists, Charles Helmers will have a chance to receive a \$1,000 education grant to continue its environmental programs.

At the end this month, environmental experts from the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles County Chief Sustainability Office, Northrop Grumman Corp., Algalita Marine Research and Education, the Surfrider Foundation’s South Bay Chapter and others will sit on the Trash Free Lunch Challenge judges’ panel.



The 2018 winning schools in the elementary school division and middle school division are expected to be chosen in the beginning of April.

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About the author



Christina Cox

Christina Cox is a multimedia journalist covering education, community and breaking news in the Santa Clarita Valley. She joined The Signal as a staff writer in August 2016.

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