



Public Works Department
123 E. Anapamu Street • Santa Barbara, CA 93101

(805) 568-3000 • FAX (805) 568-3019

www.countyofsb.org/pwd

P R E S S R E L E A S E

News Media Contact:

Sam Dickinson, Program Specialist
Public Works Department
(805) 882-3618
sdickinson@cosbpw.net

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The County and Goleta Union School District Address Food Waste

In a partnership between the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department and Goleta Union School District (GUSD), nine elementary schools have successfully implemented food share and food scraps composting programs. This program has made a huge environmental impact by preventing thousands of pounds of fruit, milk containers, and packaged food from heading to the landfill. Program Specialist Sam Dickinson said, “Food that is thrown in the trash currently ends up buried in the landfill where it slowly releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas that is one of the largest contributors to climate change.”

In addition to reducing greenhouse gases, the program helps students and staff develop good habits for disposing food waste. GUSD Food Services Director Kim Leung said, “Learning extends beyond the classroom. The cafeteria is a place for students to not only be exposed to new foods but also serves as a resource for students to learn about sustainability. We are proud to be making a difference on this planet for future generations and beyond.”

With the new Food Share Program, students place unwanted qualifying food and beverage items on designated share carts so that others can enjoy them during lunch. The carts are located in school lunch areas and are managed by cafeteria staff and adult volunteers. The County, in partnership with local environmental education group Explore Ecology, has increased student engagement by holding assemblies at participating schools.

The County Public Health Department has also helped ensure food sharing safety. Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Kendra Wise says that this program is a “great way for schools

to provide additional food to hungry people while keeping safe-to-eat foods out of our landfills. The program teaches students about food safety as well as the environmental impacts our daily actions can have. Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is excited to partner with our local schools and the Public Works Department to help make this program a success.”

GUSD has also implemented a kitchen food scraps recycling program, and several schools have started pilot programs to collect student plate waste for composting. Public Works Intern Celeste Argueta has helped support these programs at Isla Vista Elementary School and Kellogg Elementary School. Argueta said, “I am extremely proud of the District’s efforts to compost student plate waste. The schools are making a positive environmental impact and are setting a great example for other schools.”

A new food waste reduction guide was recently developed for schools called [Food Forward: School Edition](#), and provides schools with resources to start their own food waste reduction and composting programs. For more information about this resource and food waste programs, please call (805) 882-3618 or visit the County’s waste reduction website, www.LessIsMore.org. For information on how to compost where you live, visit www.LessIsMore.org/Compost.



Celeste Argueta, County Public Works Department Intern, at Kellogg School after setting up their food share cart in early October 2019.