



# CRC's GREEN SCENE

A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College

Photo by Jim West

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## In This Issue:

- 1 **Winn Center Earns LEED Platinum**
- 2 **SSF Trip to Humboldt**
- 3 **CRC Team Selected for Tiny House Contest**
- 3 **Electric Cars Multiplying at CRC**
- 4 **USGBC Visits Winn Center**
- 5 **Solar Panels: A Cautionary Tale**
- 5 **Restaurant Review: Plum Café**
- 6 **SSF Initiative Update**
- 6 **CRC's Green Hawks**

## Winn Center Earns LEED Platinum



Mike Winn, Brian Sehnert, Dave Younger, CRC President Deborah Travis, LRCCD boardmember Pamela Haynes, Chancellor Brian King, architecture professor John Ellis, architecture student Megan Lester.

### John Ellis reports...

On December 3, the Winn Center for Construction and Architecture was awarded the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) LEED Platinum Certification, the “premier mark of achievement in green building standards.” The award was presented to CRC President

Debbie Travis by Brian Sehnert, AIA, co-founder and past president of the USGBC Northern California Chapter. The LEED Platinum designation is unique and iconic, a source of great pride for our campus and the community and in tune with our original vision of the Winn Center as a living model for sustainable design. ♦

Photo above:  
The Winn Center, proud recipient of the LEED Platinum Certification, first of its kind in the Los Rios Community College District.



## SSF Trip to Humboldt Inspires Students

*César Aguirre reports...*

This November, I and a few other members of the Students for a Sustainable Future Club ventured to the town of Arcata to visit Humboldt State University (HSU). The lengthy 5½ hour drive was worth enduring, as our adventure in Humboldt County would generate knowledge, experiences, and new friends.



Once on campus, we took an exclusive two-hour campus tour, personalized for Environmental Studies and Sustainability majors, that gave us an in-depth look at how sustainability and a deep-rooted respect for the environment are intertwined among the university's academics, operations, structures, and campus life. For example, the university has a number of LEED Gold and Silver certified buildings and has pledged to construct all future buildings to LEED

Silver standards. Additionally, the campus runs its own composting program, utilizing a specialized on-site composting facility. We also learned of various appealing and relevant fields of study, such as Environmental Management and Protection, Environmental Resource Engineering, and Environmental Science.

On day two, the Green Hawks teamed up with HSU's Natural Resources Club (NRC) and other local volunteers for a joint-service project to collect litter around



*Top: The HSU tour guide (left) encourages César Aguirre (CRC) and Michael Kwong (CRC) to sample berries on the HSU campus.*

*Middle: Kara Frampton (HSU) and César Aguirre (CRC) pick up litter at Jolly Giant Creek.*

*Bottom: The CRC SSF Club and HSU Natural Resources Club pose for a group photo after filling an entire truck bed with litter.*

Arcata's creeks and waterways. The NRC holds volunteer activities in the Arcata area every weekend, functioning primarily as facilitator of service opportunities for university students. Thanks to our combined efforts that Saturday morning, we were able to fill an entire truck bed to the brim with litter. The activity even garnered attention from a local media station, and SSF's Ruben Robles was interviewed about his participation!

Other HSU honorable mentions that club members sampled include the bicycle-friendly streets and the campus's close proximity to several majestic state parks. Altogether, Humboldt County has left a lasting impression on me as a destination worthy of the attention of any student in search of a transfer university. ♦



## CRC Team Selected for SMUD Tiny House Competition

*John Ellis reports...*

Cosumnes River College was recently selected as one of 14 California colleges (including a number of community colleges as well as four-year colleges such as UC Berkeley and Stanford) to participate in the new “Tiny House” Competition, sponsored by the SMUD Energy & Technology Center and Community Solar to promote an interest in energy conservation, energy efficiency, green building, and solar technologies.

“The Tiny House Competition – Build Small and Win Big” challenges teams to design and build net-zero, tiny, solar houses. The event—modeled after the U.S. Department of Energy’s Solar Decathlon—will be held over a period of two years, with completed houses to be displayed, judged, and awarded trophies and monetary prizes in the Fall of 2016.

During the two years leading up to the event, the CRC team of ten students, guided by team leaders Profs. Ryan Connally (Construction) and John Ellis (Architecture), will design and build the energy-efficient houses, and then, during the week of competition, exhibit them to the public, judges, and the media.

SMUD will provide Tiny House competitors with a stipend of between \$3,000 and \$6,000, leaving participants to raise additional funds themselves. Interested students can contact Profs. Connally or Ellis.

CRC intends to use the Tiny House Competition to teach students—across a variety of disciplines from Construction Management to Horticulture—green and sustainable building values by introducing them to design,



construction, inspection, and auditing, thus supporting the CRC philosophy of “learning by doing.” By making it real, we expect The Tiny House Competition to motivate our students to learn about sustainability, design, constructability, safety, etc. and to have a significant multiplier effect by influencing future designers, inspectors, contractors, and citizens to value sustainability and preserve resources. ♦

## Growing Number of Electric Cars Charge for Free in CRC’s Parking Garage



What began a year ago as just one or two electric cars per day getting a free charge via solar energy (from the rooftop solar photovoltaic panels atop CRC’s parking garage – see *Green Scene*, Volume 7, Issue 1) has grown to seven cars on Tuesdays and Thursdays this semester. The first floor has a total of 14 charging stations: How long before all are being used? ♦



## More Accolades for the Winn Center: USGBC Northern California Council Visits

*John Ellis reports...*

On November 13, the United States Green Building Council Northern California Chapter (USGBC-NCC) came to CRC to tour the Winn Center and to hear its story, “Buildings that Teach: Integrating Sustainability, Building Design, and Curriculum within the Built Environment.” The presentation was made by Dave Younger, AIA, and Jonathan McMurtry, AIA, of Lionakis Architects, along with architecture professor John Ellis, AIA.

When CRC was ready to design a new interdisciplinary classroom building that would house more than seven different programs, it was clearly an amazing opportunity for integrated teaching and learning. Thus, more than six years ago, CRC architecture students were assigned the project as part of their design studio, an instructional approach to engage the student voice. Four of the student projects were selected to inform the program statement (issued by LRCCD Facilities), and the District turned to a

design-build competition—a collaboration among users, architect, and contractor—to design a sustainable, flexible, and technology-rich LEED Platinum building. The intention was for the Winn Center to become a campus educational hub, a south area community center, a conference center for the environmental design professions, and most importantly, a teaching tool for future generations of architects and contractors. The USGBC visit and presentation were the evidence of mission—or rather vision—accomplished. ♦

## Solar Panels: A Cautionary Tale



*Editors' Note: In the Green Scene, February/March 2014, Greg Beyrer described his family's investment in a solar panel array. Here, Greg summarizes his savings.*

*Greg Beyrer reports...*

After a year of living with our solar panel array, I am confident in saying I am “in between” the financial benefits that I expect to accrue from my family's investment in green technology. Yes, we received a healthy rebate when we filed our income taxes for the year we purchased the array, and the net cost of that rebate will become part of the cost basis for our house when we eventually sell. However, the very low monthly bill was offset by the annual reckoning with SMUD.

When I first reported on the array soon after its installation,

I guessed we would save enough money for a trip to Paris, but the question was whether it would be Paris, France or Paris, Texas. Having compared the total amount we spent on electricity during the years before and after installation, I now look forward to taking my wife for a weekend dinner at Chez Pannis in Berkeley (well, at least the restaurant has a French name). While dining on the sustainably produced local fare, we'll make a toast to the four tons of carbon offset by our solar panels and appreciate the fact that during our “trip,” we won't have to convert miles to kilometers or dollars to euros. ♦

## Restaurant Review: Local, Vegan, Sustainable... Yummy Plum Café!

*Steven Coughran and Julie Hawthorne report...*

Being plant-based is a big step toward sustainability. Featuring local ingredients and using mostly biodegradable packaging is an additional draw. Which is, in part, why Plum Café, an all-vegan restaurant at 2315 K St., has been one of our favorite places for a weekend lunch.

This time, we enjoyed the generous Sunday brunch buffet, \$13.95 per person. The array included biscuits and mushroom gravy, blueberry pancakes, hash brown potatoes, “chicken” wraps, “chicken” Alfredo, flavorful scrambled tofu with Daiya cheese, butternut squash soup, fruit and salad bar, and desserts from Plum Vegan Bakery.

For lunch, our favorite menu items are the sumptuous tempeh

Reuben and the yummy sweet potato panini. We have also enjoyed Plum’s various soft tacos, burgers, chili, and baked herb-and-garlic fries.

And these do not only appeal to the vegan palate. We have taken the café’s Thanksgiving offerings with us to dinner with our meat-eating friends, and everyone has enjoyed them.

The beverage menu is also extensive, including a variety of juices; espresso drinks made with Temple coffee, our favorite local roaster; a selection of vegan beers and wines, many of them organic; and rotating flavors of kombucha on tap. With our brunch, we had the blackcurrant and the melon, both delicious.

On this most recent visit, we ate in the spacious heated patio area, decorated with plants

and small fountains. Families, couples, and groups of friends sat at neighboring tables amongst Plum’s funky but comfortable atmosphere.

We recommend Plum Café but should warn potential diners that Plum is preparing for a major rebranding, including a name change and an expansion to include a music and comedy lounge. We’ll certainly be curious to see how their expansion and rebranding change the dining experience. ♦

*Editors’ Note: Since the writing of this article just a couple of weeks ago, Plum Café has been renamed Garden to Grill.*



## GEOG 302 Takes a Field Trip to Soil Born Farm

*Prof. Debra Sharkey's Geography 302 class learns about sustainable farming practices on their field trip to Soil Born Farm.*



*Student Amal Rasooli scratches the tummy of one of the farm's heritage hogs.*



*Students Zaheer Salam (left) and Andy Aguilar (right) place mulch around the base of one of the farm's fruit trees.*





## Cosumnes River College Sustainability Committee

### Members:

- Steven Coughran (Chair)
- Julie Elliot
- John Ellis
- Cindy Erickson
- Cath Hooper
- Bob Johnson
- Christina Ocrant
- Andrea Salmi
- Sangchin Sertich
- Debra Sharkey
- Linnell Violett

### Student Members:

- César Aguirre
- Jaime Gonzalez

### Newsletter:

- Cindy Erickson
- Cath Hooper
- Christina Ocrant



We're on the web!

Look for archived issues of the **GREEN SCENE** on the CRC Homepage



## SSF Club

## Students Make Progress on Sustainability Initiative

*Jaime Gonzalez reports...*

Students for a Sustainable Future (SSF) club is making substantial progress on a number of the campus sustainability initiatives it kicked off earlier this semester (see *Green Scene*, Sep-Oct 2014) but especially on its campaign to reduce campus paper-towel waste. This initiative, which aims to reduce the amount of landfill waste generated in campus restrooms by paper towel usage, has entered the pilot phase: awareness stickers have been placed

on paper-towel waste dispensers in the cafeteria and library restrooms, where they will remain for one month to see how they hold up to everyday wear. If the stickers prove sufficiently durable, campus administration has agreed to allow the club to place them in every restroom on campus. Over time, these awareness stickers will save the school hundreds of dollars and reduce a significant amount of waste that would otherwise end up in the landfill. ♦



## CRC's Green Hawks

SSF members Michael Kwong, Jaime Gonzalez (President), and Cesar Aguirre present Michelle Santillan (HSU Natural Resources Club president) with an SSF club T-shirt during their trip to Humboldt State in November.