



Lafayette Resident Involved in Two Green Awards Projects

By Sophie Braccini



Tina Curiel from Campolindo in front of the Green Awards display at Earth Day in Lafayette
Photo Sophie Braccini



Joann Tan checking the solar meter and the tank-less water heater in her Lafayette home
Photo Sophie Braccini

The City of Lafayette and Sustainable Lafayette recently honored ten recipients with “Green Awards.” They are residents that have been vectors of change in the area of sustainable living. Ten entities were recognized, from individuals to churches and schools to businesses. Joann Tan collected two awards: one as an individual, another as the initiator of the Holy Planet Task Force at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church. “I was very bashful,” says a modest Tan, “I do not like public attention very much, unless it can help a cause.”

Tan’s motivation came two years ago when struck by the

amount of waste we generate. Her Lafayette house needed a new furnace so she shopped for a system that would be intelligent, could take advantage of the hot air in the attic and heat differently the diverse areas of her home.

At the same time, she installed a tank-less water heater and solar panels on her roof. “I like a warm temperature in my house,” says Tan, “but I didn’t like the heights our PG&E bills were reaching.” For the summer, she decided to join PG&E’s SmartAC program to slightly reduce the amount of electricity that air conditioners use during those few extremely hot summer days when system demand starts to peak. PG&E can dispatch a radio signal to the tens of thousands of SmartAC devices already installed throughout the area. “This is totally seamless,” explains an enthusiastic Tan, “it’s not ‘big brother’ watching your usage, you can override it.” Tan has more convincing to do in that area since PG&E reports only 258 signups in Lafayette (and 157 in both Moraga and Orinda).

“One has to act at the individual level, in the home, and then take it to the community,” says Tan. That’s what she did. Her passion spilled over to her church, Our Savior’s Lutheran Church and its Holy Planet Task Force. Many successful programs were implemented thanks to tremendous community support, including lighting upgrades with CLF tubes and motion sensors; e-waste recycling event that gathered 15,000 pounds of electronics; congregation education program; selling reusable shopping bags; and elimination of the use of paper and Styrofoam for their events. It is these programs that earned the church a green award.

Tan is now getting ready to embark in a new campaign. During a recent trip to Germany and Austria she was impressed by how these large countries recycle plastics in public places. Every public venue offers a choice of four trash bins, one of them just for plastic wrappers, foils and so forth. Tan knows that leakage of plastic in food has been undeniably identified as a carcinogen for both breast and prostate cancer. She wants these materials to be isolated and recycled.

“We are in a democracy and one power that we have is the right to petition.” The strong willed woman plans to start a letter campaign addressed to our Waste Management Authority. To succeed, she will need again strong community support.

