

nSAVING WATER ON THE PENINSULA

Students knock to save energy

Teenagers will canvass North Shoreview for pilot home energy survey

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Residents of San Mateo's North Shoreview neighborhood shouldn't be alarmed if teenagers knock on their door this weekend and ask how often they shower or turn on the heat.

About 40 to 50 student volunteers from Aragon, Hillsdale and San Mateo high schools will start going house to house today and Sunday as part of a pilot home energy program.

The goal is "to get a sample idea of what current water and energy usage and needs are within the city of San Mateo so that we can create some sort of city-wide comprehensive program," said Christina Gilmore, a Community Development Department employee who is coordinating the project.

Gilmore said the city chose North Shoreview, in part because many of the homes in that part of San Mateo date back to the 1930s and 1950s.

"We just want to know: have people made modifications to their homes?" Gilmore said. "If we find that there's a significant percentage of the housing stock where people haven't had the chance to upgrade, is there a chance for the city to find funding" for an improvement program?

Money for such projects may soon become available under federal stimulus package energy efficiency grants, Gilmore noted.

The students and other volunteers from the Sierra Club and Sustainable San Mateo County will meet at 9 a.m. both days at the Mid-Peninsula Boys & Girls Club, 200 North Quebec St.

Mayor Brandt Grotte is scheduled to deliver opening remarks, and the volunteers will go through a brief orientation.

Brianna Nelson, 16, said she decided to sign up for a shift on Saturday after city staff gave a presentation to her advisory group.

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"I thought it was really interesting," the Hillsdale High School junior said Friday.

Nelson said she wouldn't describe herself as a hard-core environmentalist but does make an effort to minimize activities that impact the planet negatively.

"I'm definitely environmentally conscious in terms of recycling and, if it's three blocks, walk don't drive," Nelson said.

The city hopes volunteers will be able to get 200 to 300 homeowners to complete the roughly 10-minute survey, which includes questions about a home's square footage, the number of refrigerators and television sets there, whether residents water the gardens with a hose or timed sprinklers and whether homeowners have made insulation or window improvements, among other things, Gilmore said.

Volunteers will enter residents who complete the survey into a raffle to win a free home energy audit. Sustainable Spaces Inc., of San Francisco, and Mountain View-based HomeZ Inc. have donated three comprehensive audits to help residents reduce their monthly bills and minimize environmental impacts.

San Mateo residents can calculate their monthly carbon output and get tips on how to conserve on a city Web site, www.co2nscious.net/sanmateo.

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