

TRAINING FOR SERVICE

Environmentalism is becoming one of the most important issues in today's politics. More and more candidates for legislative and executive positions are adding conservation and sustainable energy to their proposed agendas. It is not, however, a new ideal in any way. Programs that promote environmental sustainability, conservation, and restoration have been around since the 1960s. They are becoming more popular and more widespread as ecological consciousness develops.

One program that promotes environmentalism in California is Rising Sun Energy Center (RSEC). For the last five years, RSEC has provided energy and water conservation audits and hardware installation to over 6,500 residences in the San Francisco Bay Area; has trained over 200 high school and college students as energy specialists; and has served more than 1,700 homes in 2006 alone through the California Youth Energy Services (CYES) program, attaining a cumulative savings of 538,000 kWh and 23,000 therms per year. At current costs, participating residents save a cumulative \$102,000, and 475 tons of carbon dioxide emissions are prevented annually. There is a rapidly growing demand for these services, proving how important and how necessary the program is.

In June 2003, I started working in the CYES program as a youth energy specialist. I became interested in the program when the program's director came to my high school Environmental Science class to find interested applicants. Ori Skloot and Liz Penny, who were, respectively, the executive director and director at the time, trained us in how to perform comprehensive energy and water audits and how to install the materials we offered. Before we could install anything, we were required to look at all the major home appliances, such as



the water heater, refrigerator, stove and oven, and furnace or space heater. We assessed the energy efficiency of these appliances, using the knowledge we had gained from our training. Another part of our audit consisted of checking the sinks and showers for water flow. We learned how to check for water flow and what flow rate was considered efficient, according to East Bay Municipal Utility District standards. As we performed the audit, we explained to our clients what we were looking for and why their appliances or faucets were inefficient, and we suggested ways of improving them.

At the end of the audit, we installed the energy- and water-saving devices we had brought with us, after receiving the consent of the client. We installed faucet aerators, showerheads, clotheslines, and CFLs, all of which were free to the client. At the

end of our visit, we once again went over what we had found in the audit and how to improve the home's efficiency, and we gave the clients additional information about everyday things they could do around the house to save water and energy.

This was my first job of this caliber. It was a bit overwhelming at first, but it quickly became a very enjoyable occupation. I had enough fun that summer to inspire me to work for CYES again the following year. By the second year, I had graduated from high school and was on my way to Mills College, in Oakland. I hadn't decided on a major yet, but I was leaning towards religious studies or philosophy. However, after working more with CYES and finding so much satisfaction in that line of work, I decided to major in environmental studies. It was Liz Penny who first taught me what environmental justice meant. When she

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Weatherization



explained it to us, I knew that that was what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to work not only toward bettering my environment, but also toward bettering the lives of the people in my community.

As I write this, I have just finished my third year at Mills, and I have taken up an internship at Rising Sun Energy Center. I want to work more with the program, helping it expand to new areas and serve more clients. This is a very important program; it should be made available to everyone in the country—and, eventually, in the world. There are few who can say that saving money while saving the planet isn't worthwhile. Rising Sun Energy Center is doing its part to stop the damage that has

been done by burning fossil fuels and wasting our water supply.



—Mollie R. Dutton-Starbuck

Mollie R. Dutton-Starbuck is an intern at the Rising Sun Energy Center in Berkeley, California.

For more information:

The California Youth Energy Services program (CYES) is under the new direction of Executive Director Jodi Pincus and Director Jailan Adly, and is expanding this year to Emeryville and San Rafael. If you are interested in finding out more about the CYES program and the Rising Sun Energy Center, go to www.risingsunenergy.org, or call (510)665-1501.