

MSEL freshmen reduce emissions and change the system

The freshmen in the Marin School of Environmental Leadership have been very busy this semester. Every semester, the students of MSEL choose one project to work on in the community or the school. A group of five freshman; Nina Mazbar, Bridget Rodgers, Rosie Giusti, Jackson Taylor, and Malcolm Culbertson, worked together on a semester-long project with local group Resilient Neighborhoods, becoming the first pilot group to see if students could handle the program. They called themselves the, "Marin Carbon Eliminating Leaders," which, when abbreviated, is MCEL. Clever children.

Resilient Neighborhoods operates under the non-profit agency Sustainable Marin, and is designed for families to work together to reduce carbon emissions. They track the carbon output of their families over the duration of the program, offering tips and instructions to reduce their overall carbon footprint. MSEL freshman Biology teacher Sara Frack said, "The Resilient Neighborhoods program empowers people to make positive changes in their lives to protect the environment." To date, Resilient Neighborhoods has helped reduce over two million pounds of carbon. They also offer "community resilience points" as an incentive to do activities that wouldn't necessarily reduce emissions, but at the same time improve their communities; for example, attending a community disaster emergency seminar.

As the first-ever student team in Resilient Neighborhoods, these freshman had a lot to prove. But they flew through the program, reducing their household carbon emissions more than 80% of all other teams that have participated, totalling 101,500 pounds of carbon reduced and earning 41,850 community resilience points.

Frack commented, "The program is designed for adults, so these students helped redesign it to work for teens." They also developed a board game to help make the program more attractive to youth. After determining that this program was indeed possible for students to succeed in, Nina, Bridget, Rosie, Jackson, and Malcolm have decided to work with MSEL faculty to incorporate this program into the curriculum of all future freshman – reducing your own personal carbon footprint is, after all, an important step in becoming an environmental leader.