



## Trash-picking robot

Build your own world just like Jordan! All the materials you need are in your home.

Remarkable Jordan, from our cover story, likes to look through what his mom is getting rid of, brainstorm a character or contraption he can build, and then go all in! When he feels something isn't finished, he goes back to the carts to look for the missing piece. For Jordan's trash machine, he used a cardboard box and a plastic bread bag. He finds inspiration from characters he likes, and you can too!

Make your own RecycleSmart character, reusing materials around the house. And when it's time to build something else, recycle the old and start again. Send us your upcycled creatures anytime: [Authority@RecycleSmart.org](mailto:Authority@RecycleSmart.org)



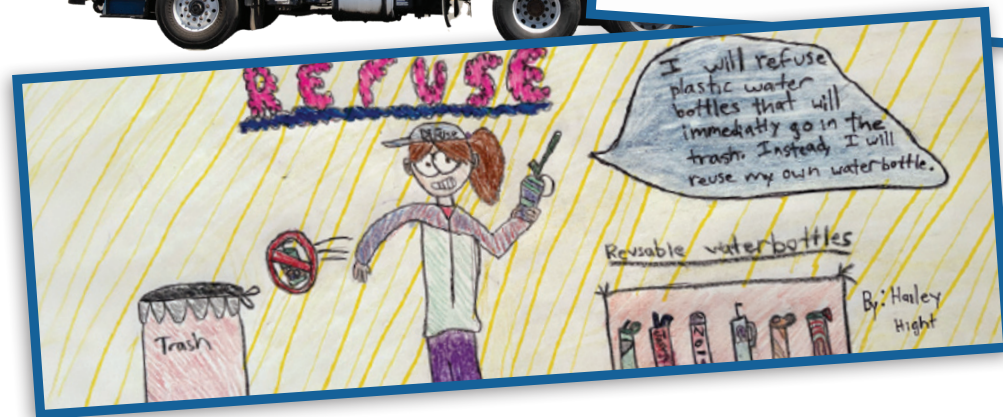
1850 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Ste. 320  
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
CONCORD, CA  
PERMIT NO. 99



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- See who's scored scholarships
- Reducing waste in record amounts
- \$3000 grants for local projects!



Hailey refuses plastic bottles!

Emma's excited about the Five R's

## V-R-R-R-R-oom!

We're so happy to announce our "Five R's" poster contest winners!

Recently, RecycleSmart opened a call for young artists to promote the "Five R's" of waste reduction—Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot! Central Contra Costa's creative kids took the task to heart and came up with some fun ways to educate

the community. Winners will appear on the side of Republic Service's garbage, recycling and organics trucks. Be on the lookout!

Congratulations to The Seven Hills School student Emma Xia, from Lafayette, and Sycamore Valley Elementary School's Hailey Hight, from Danville, for their winning entries.

Hello, I'm a talking recycling bin! Scan the QR code or text "Hello Recycling Bin" to 925-940-5795 and I'll help you sort your items!



SUMMER 2025

# Remarkable recyclers in Lafayette

Get to know the Knolles!

*A few months ago, we started a search for a real family to share their stories of waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Now we're ready to introduce them to you... Say hello to the Knolles!*

*Laura, John, and their two boys Johnny (10) and Jordan (7) from Lafayette know a thing or two about how to reduce household waste—which makes them the perfect poster family for RecycleSmart.*

*Each issue of the newsletter, we'll follow the Knolles on their journey to reduce more waste, picking up some useful tips along the way...*

### Episode 1: Stand by your plan

The Knolles' waste reduction journey began with tackling trouble spots and identifying opportunities for improvement. Laura keeps a log of the family's habits, marking what they throw away, what they recycle, and where there's room for improvement. Tracking just a week's worth of waste helped them figure out some changes that would make a big difference.

One of the first discoveries Laura made was that the family consumed a lot of single-use paper products like napkins and paper towels. They switched to reusable materials—cloth napkins for everyday use and washable rags instead of paper towels. The family keeps baskets in the pantry: one each for clean and dirty napkins, so they're easy to find and easy to gather up for washing. A similar strategy works under the sink for rags. Keeping reusables in reach makes it easy for the whole family.

Another area for improvement was cleaning products. Many warehouse stores sell large containers of soap and detergents that you can use to refill smaller bottles around the house. Those big containers save you money over smaller containers, too. Saving money and reducing waste is a win-win!

As the Knolles' journey continues, they've been approaching things one change at a time, finding solutions that are easy to implement but that make a meaningful impact. To them, it's all about progress, not perfection!



[RecycleSmart.org](https://RecycleSmart.org)





# Announcing our 2025 scholarships

Back in 2015, RecycleSmart initiated our Waste Reduction Student Scholarship program to inspire and reward young leaders who have helped reduce waste at their high schools.

This year we're celebrating two local scholars:

**Hayley Takeshima**, current president of Acalanes High School's leadership community, member of the Acalanes Union High School District Sustainability Committee, and former RecycleSmart Schools Program Intern, focused her energy on waste reduction. She co-created two videos currently used to train multiple school communities by the RecycleSmart Schools Team. Hayley will head to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo this fall to study electrical engineering.

**Yaowei Li**, president of Monte Vista High School's Climate Action Now (CAN) Club, led a group of club members in a five-day visual waste audit to help the RecycleSmart Schools Team confirm the volume reported by the district hauler for landfill and recycling. He made a huge impact on food waste at MVHS by improving their food share program. Yaowei will study Biology at the University of California, Davis this fall.

If you or someone you know is a rock star recycling scholar, visit **RecycleSmart.org/waste-reduction-scholarships** to learn about student scholarships for Spring 2026.

## Need more info?



Editor, Janna McKay  
Janna@RecycleSmart.org

For tips, resources and other recycling services!

**www.RecycleSmart.org**  
925-906-1801  
Authority@RecycleSmart.org

For questions about your bi-annual Reuse Day contact Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery at 925-692-2286 or visit **RecycleSmart.org/reuse-day**



### Organics, Recycling and Landfill

925-685-4711

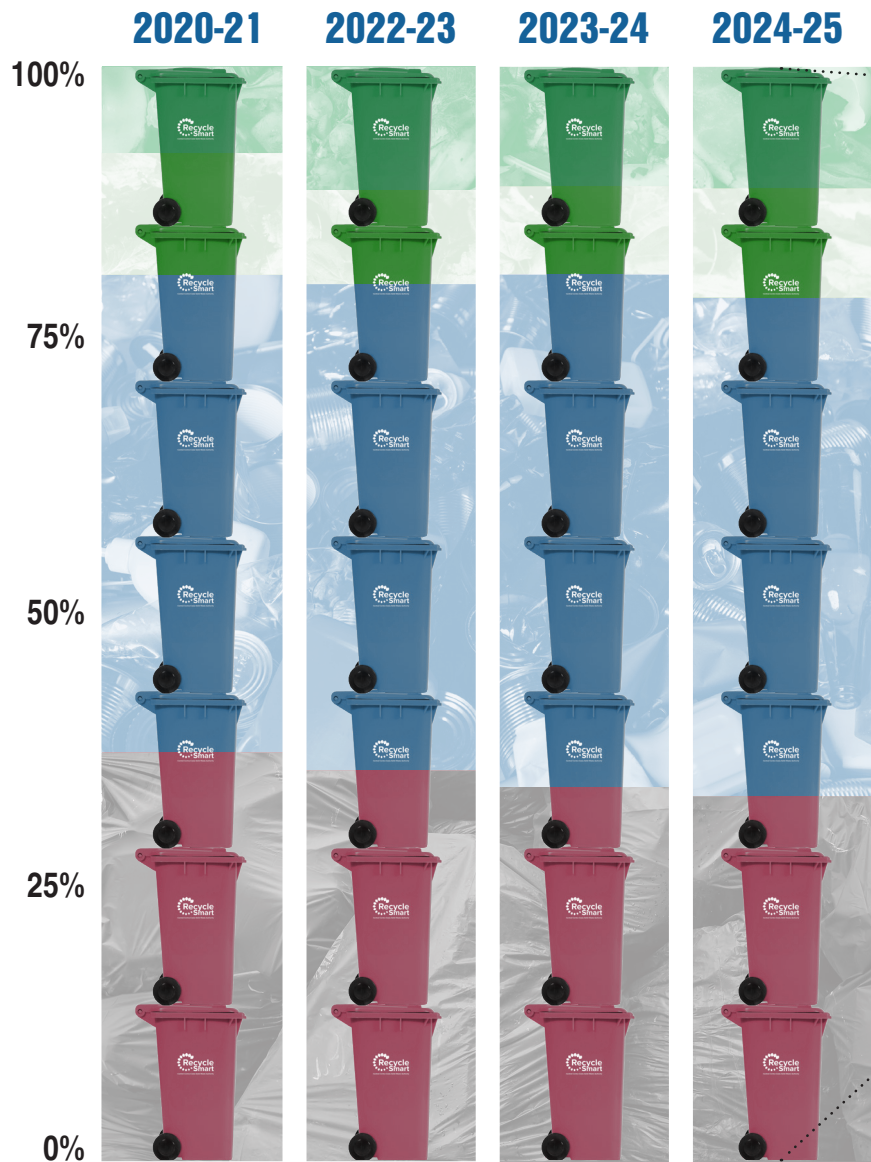
For questions concerning your recycling, organics or landfill carts, billing, new service, vacation hold requests, computer and TV collection, special cleanups or to request motor oil recycling kits and kitchen food scraps containers.



Printed on paper made from post consumer waste (PCW).

# School sorters rule!

Our schools program team presented 53 assemblies or classroom talks in the RecycleSmart service area last school year! More than 4,600 students benefited from Wastebusters programs during the 2024-25 school year. Twenty schools won Wastebusters Awards for achieving 75% or more recycling and composting. This chart shows how our schools divert waste from the landfill-more every year-with the support of faculty, janitors, and environmental clubs. Now that's stellar! Visit **RecycleSmart.org/wastebusters** for complete details.



Congrats to the 20 Wastebuster schools reaching 75% or more recycling and composting



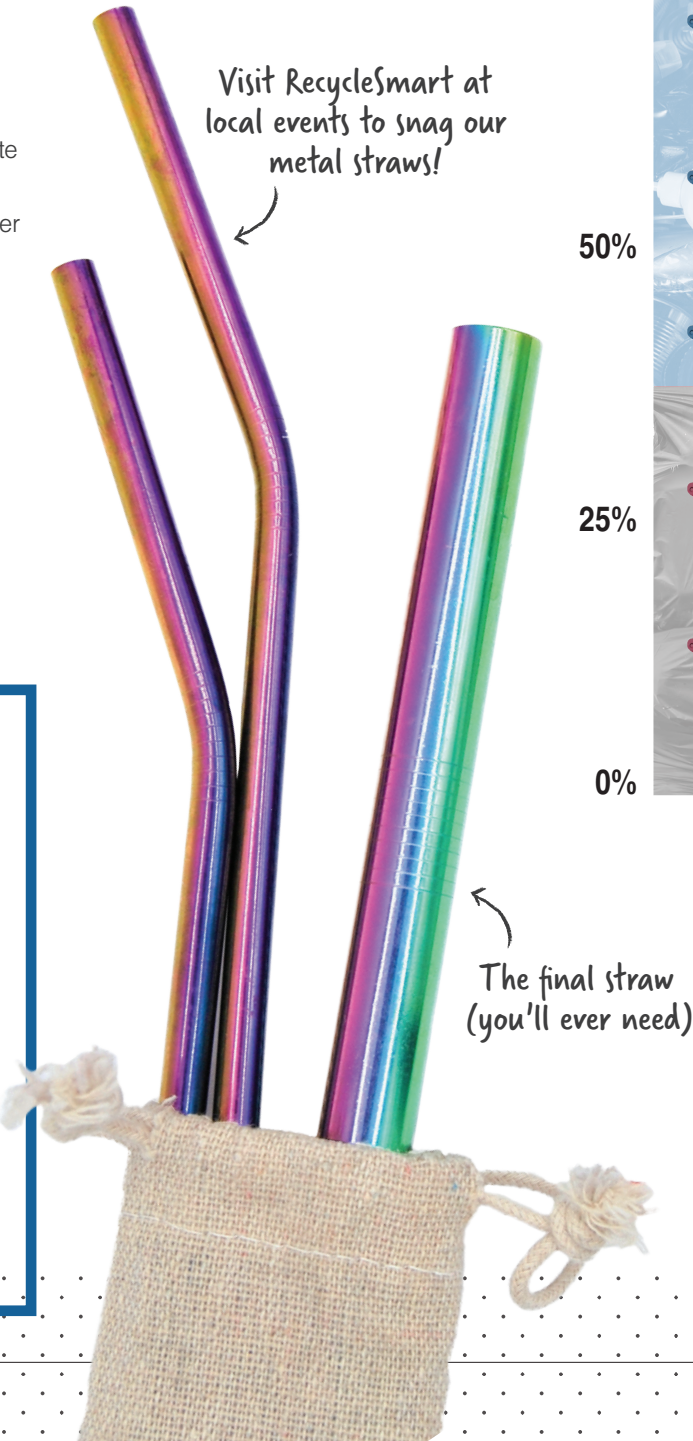
See the whole list online!



### MAKING STRIDES AT LOCAL SCHOOLS

Moraga and Lafayette Unified are making big moves with reusables in their school cafeterias. The schools have begun to work with a food service provider that provides reusable silverware and plastic baskets, eliminating the need for single-use plasticware.

Is your school looking for ways to go greener? You may be eligible for a new grant promoting the use of reusables like trays, utensils, cups, and more to eliminate mealtime waste in the cafeteria. Reach out to us at **Authority@RecycleSmart.org** to find out more!



## Apply for a \$3000 waste reduction grant!

Is your project or organization looking for a boost? Help us celebrate those in our community doing their part to conserve natural resources and reduce waste.

Republic Services will grant a community waste reduction project \$3,000 this fall. Projects must be related to recycling, composting or other waste-reduction initiatives.

They can be new or ongoing projects that need a little funding to expand! The only requirement is that projects must be located in the RecycleSmart service area: Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, Diablo, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, or Walnut Creek.

The winner will be selected based on public voting by Central Contra Costa residents this November.

Head over to **ContraCostaRecycles.com** to submit your application by October 10, 2025.

**Correction:** A reader tip in our Spring issue recommended using fence boards for a DIY project. Treated wood is hazardous waste and should not be used in your garden. It should be safely disposed as we describe here: **RecycleSmart.org/construction-demo**