
Oxford Newsletter

Ms. Omania Wins EPA Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators

On May 8, Oxford teacher and Green Team founder Jacqueline Omania received the EPA President's Award for the top Innovative Environmental Educator for EPA Zone 9- encompassing California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, 148 tribal territories, and the Pacific Islands. It was no easy task: it involved nine pages of essays, five pages of documentation, three pages of curriculum, three letters of reference - one from a student. "I was doing work in all the categories that they wanted," Omania says. "Besides plastic pollution mitigation I was also covering the food category with our Full Belly Farm shares as well as maintaining equity of exposure to the ideas. So now I know I am doing a good job!"

The Confessional Liaison to the EPA wrote to Congresswoman Barbara Lee, "Ms. Omania has gone above and beyond in her teaching career to better her student's understanding of our natural world and conservation of its precious resources. Around 25 years ago, she was involved in the development of the well known Edible Schoolyard program founded by Alice Waters of the world famous Chez Panisse. More recently, Ms. Omania has focused her environmental education efforts on getting her students to think critically about how they generate waste in their daily lives and ways to reduce it. She created the Plastic Free Planet curriculum and leads an environmental club for students that meets weekly during lunch and provides a space for students to connect, practice public speaking and learn about the environment."

[Link to Information on EPA's Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental](#)

Educators Program: <https://www.epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators>



In addition, this year Ms. Omania and science teacher Jennifer Bridgeman were selected to participate in the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Plastic Pollution Summit with like-minded teachers from all over the state.

They attended 3 workshops in all and carried out an inquiry-based science project aimed at reducing plastic pollution on campus. Omania and Bridgeman focused on the student's Wasteless Wednesday work. Each Wednesday Oxford students have been substituting metal cutlery (all donated) for the plastic cutlery provided in the lunch room. So far in 10 Wasteless Wednesdays we have saved 2,400 plastic spoons and forks from the landfill.

As a finale, 6 students were allowed to participate in an overnight experience at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. They presented their project on Wasteless Wednesday

as well as their work on the Disposable Free Dining Ordinance and their experiences being in a Zero Waste Classroom to many students from schools all over the state. The 6 youth chosen have done stellar environmental work, often beyond the bounds of the school day, such as speaking at City Council for their 3rd, 4th and 5th grade years at Oxford. They are definitely the environmental leaders of today and the future! Also pictured is Brandon Luckey, Oxford alum and classroom aide who served as a chaperone for the boys. It was an absolutely stellar experience for all to sleep next to the tanks in the Kelp Forest- Deep Sea.

As noted in last month's newsletter, on May 1, the Heirs to Our Oceans received the Sierra Club Regional prize called the Emerging Voices Prize. The youth will be honored in September in San Francisco. Councilmember Sophie Hahn nominated us as she was so moved by the strength and persistence of the youth for presenting at city council and press conferences.

Finally, the Presidential Award unfortunately did not come with funding to attend the ceremony in Washington DC. Please consider supporting Ms.Omania to attend this very special event.

https://www.gofundme.com/ms-omania039s-epa-presidential-award&rcid=r01-155884434315-54c124878c7d47ee&pc=ot_co_campmgmt_w