

Coyote Point Museum and Hillsborough AYSO kick out plastic waste

By Daisy Miao, San Mateo County Times

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008

How many water bottles can one youth soccer organization run through in a single soccer season?

The Hillsborough chapter of the American Youth Soccer Organization used more than 30,000 single-use bottles during last season's practices and games. But all that waste is history, thanks to a joint program with the Coyote Point Museum.

The San Mateo museum, which educates children and families on wildlife and the environment, worked with the Hillsborough soccer association to purchase some 400 reusable plastic water bottles in an effort to reduce the team's carbon footprint.

"Our goal is to get people to eliminate single-use and sales of bottles, which could significantly save the energy and reduce air pollution across San Mateo County," said Abi Karlin-Resnick, director of advancement for Coyote Point Museum, who noted that the reusable bottles are chemical-free.

Earlier this year, Coyote Point Museum also launched the Know Your H2O project, which educates museum visitors about the impact of single-use water bottles on the environment. The museum is making one of its first big splashes with the 1,100 players, coaches and referees of the Hillsborough soccer league.

"I was flabbergasted at the amount of waste generated by this seemingly innocuous practice in providing single-use water bottles for the players," said Linda Fitzpatrick, the mother of two young Hillsborough players. "It's a small change for each family, but will make such a big local impact on our community's carbon footprint."

"Trash cans that used to overflow at the end of a soccer Saturday are now barely full," parent Laurie Moore said.

Only about 13 percent of disposable plastic water bottles actually get recycled, according to the Container Recycling Institute. Producing and shipping bottled water creates 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide per year in the United States, according to the Pacific Institute.

EPA says New England had fewer bad air days

The Associated Press

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008

MONTPELIER, Vt.—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says people in New England states breathed easier this summer, with fewer "unhealthy ozone" days than in 2007—unless you were in Vermont.

Five of the region's six states had fewer poor air quality days between April and September than in the same period last year. The EPA says the summer of 2008 had 28 days in which ozone monitors recorded concentrations above the health standards, compared with 53 last year.

But Vermont had three of those days this summer, compared with none last summer.

Western initiative sets up emissions-trading plan

The Associated Press

Tri-Valley Herald and Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008

SACRAMENTO—Seven Western states and four Canadian provinces are proposing the nation's most comprehensive program to cut greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, manufacturers and vehicles.

The Western Climate Initiative would establish a regional market to trade carbon emissions and is designed to keep costs down for those affected.

The plan sets the parameters for a so-called cap-and-trade program to help cut the region's emissions below 2005 levels by 2020.

The plan affects Arizona, California, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and the four Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. Each state and province must approve the plan.

Motorcycles, scooters pollute much more than cars

By Gary Richards, Mercury News

In the Tri-Valley Herald, Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Q I heard on Paul Harvey that motor scooters put out 90 times more exhaust pollutants than a sports utility vehicle. Does this also apply to motorcycles? If more drivers give up their vehicles and switch to motorcycles in an attempt to save fuel, our air may get much worse. Are there plans to set emission limits on motorcycles?

Wesley Van Osdol, San Jose

A Motor scooters are considered motorcycles for emission control purposes in California, and while motorcycles today are far cleaner than those sold before emission standards were adopted, the average bike emits about nine times (not 90) more pollutants than the average car or truck. These greater emissions rates have not been a problem because motorcycles are a small segment of all the vehicles registered in California. But as more motorcycles are being driven, their higher emissions could have a greater impact on air quality. The state air board then might consider toughening smog rules. But for now, current requirements are deemed reasonable.

[Bakersfield Californian Commentary, Monday, September 22, 2008:](#)

Robert Price: One traffic theory that goes round and round

by Robert Price, Californian columnist

Turns out Father Garces was ahead of his time in more ways than we knew. The martyred Franciscan friar — or, his 22-foot-tall chiseled image, to be more specific — stands watch over the most unusual and baffling traffic feature in Bakersfield: a roundabout known as the Garces Circle.

You might think the Garces Circle is a throwback to a time before the driving public figured out the art of self preservation. Well, surprise. Traffic engineers across the country are suddenly coming around to the realization that roundabouts, in any of their various forms, are generally superior to the traditional four-way intersection.

Here's why: Roundabouts eliminate the left turn, by far the most dangerous maneuver on the American road. They negate the possibility of the side-impact collision, which accounts for 28 percent of all road fatalities. They save gas and minimize [air pollution](#) because there's no more idling at red lights. Cars enter the roundabout — first yielding to vehicles already there — and slowly turn a leftward circle before easing out at the desired street. No stopping.

But to many drivers — dare I say the vast majority? — roundabouts don't merely run counterclockwise, they run counter-intuitive. They seem intimidating, confusing, foreign.

Which, it turns out, is what makes them so safe. Remarkably safe. The Indianapolis suburb of Carmel, Ind., has built 50 roundabouts since 2001, and city officials report a 78 percent drop in injury accidents in that time. Why? Because drivers can't shave or apply mascara when they're in a roundabout. Traffic experts have somehow concluded that the average driver adjusts his radio 7.4 times per hour of driving, and searches for something (gum, sunglasses, that pretzel stick that fell into the cup holder) 10.8 times per hour. Only a moron or a 17-year-old would attempt such a maneuver in a roundabout.

Maybe it's the absence of traffic control equipment that makes it work. No traffic lights, few signs. You're on your own, so behave yourself: Sort of a libertarian approach to transportation.

I've been fascinated by roundabouts ever since I visited Mexico City when I was 20. The part of that awesome, sprawling city that stays with me most is the roundabout encircling the 120-foot-tall Angel of Independence column on the Paseo de la Reforma.

Which illustrates another benefit of roundabouts: They lend themselves to public art and distinctive landscaping (best enjoyed from the passenger seat). Father Garces couldn't be in a better spot. Not only is there something honorable about his solitary perch astride Chester Avenue and (roughly) 30th Street, the good friar's island habitat has kept him relatively graffiti-free.

Roundabouts are sort of a European thing. France has 30,000, a third of the world's collection. But they're gaining in popularity in the U.S. Midwest, of all places. About 1,000 have been built in 25 states, including Kansas, where a recent Kansas State University study found that roundabouts had resulted in a 65 percent average drop in traffic delays. The roundabout fans in Carmel, Ind., report having saved about 240,000 gallons of gas per year per roundabout since 2001. And a 2002 Swedish study found that roundabouts cut hydrocarbon emissions by 42 percent and other assorted pollutants across board.

One of the main drawbacks to roundabouts has always been the risk to cyclists and pedestrians, but newer models seem to have engineered most of those problems away.

Part of the reason roundabouts freak us out is no doubt their rarity. The Garces Circle, which opened in 1932, has a near-twin in Long Beach, but roundabouts are otherwise unheard of in Southern California. Seattle has about 100, not including all the small ones used as traffic-calming devices in residential neighbors. And now a few Northern California towns and cities, including Sacramento and Oroville, are talking about them.

Bakersfield officials actually talked about converting the Garces Circle to a more traditional U.S. intersection some years ago, but architectural historians won out. The circle's physical attributes, city traffic engineer Steve Walker said, made it historically significant.

"Modern roundabouts are becoming more and more popular, though," Walker said, "and I think there are some good applications out there. But when there's a lot of traffic, they get challenging. One lane seems to be OK but two lanes gets difficult and three lanes, forget it."

Forget driving in them? Or forget trying to order Chinese takeout while you're driving in them? Intimidation can actually be useful.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008:](#)

With air fee lawsuit tossed, developers need to move on

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit challenging fees developers must pay to mitigate the pollution caused by their projects. It's time to move on from this contentious issue and continue with the task of cleaning the Valley's air.

The fees were established by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District in 2005, and have been charged since March 2006.

Builders are required to measure the added pollution that comes from new development, such as residential tracts or large commercial projects, from construction and later from such sources as traffic in and out of the developments.

The fees can be offset by incorporating air-friendly measures such as energy-efficient construction and appliances, bike and walking lanes and outdoor outlets for electric mowers.

Builders complain that the fees only add to the cost of homes and other buildings, and they're right, no doubt, though the actual increase is difficult to measure.

But poor air quality carries a high cost as well. The Valley's poor air is estimated to add more than \$3 billion annually to health costs in the region, and that's just one measure of pollution's high price.

The builders who brought the lawsuit have said they'll study Friday's ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill and decide whether an appeal is in order. We hope they'll decide to let it go. Every sector of the Valley's economy bears part of the responsibility for our bad air, and every sector must be part of the solution. It's time to focus on real efforts to clear the air, not endless legal battles.