

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RIO DEL SOL STEAM SCHOOL TO HOST “COMPOST TEA PARTY” NOV. 15
PARTNERING WITH THE ENCAMPMENT FOR CITIZENSHIP WITH SUPPORT FROM
PATAGONIA AND THE NEW TUDOR FOUNDATION.**

More than 700 students and community volunteers will come together Nov. 15 to learn how to create pesticide-free landscapes that sequester carbon and save water.

El Rio, Calif. — In response to global warming and an incident last spring with nitrate-contaminated drinking water in the community, Rio del Sol STEAM School students will participate in a school-wide “compost tea party” on Friday, Nov. 15, to shower their school grounds with all-natural soil-enriching brew. Community experts and volunteers will guide 700 kindergarten to 7th grade students to douse the school’s landscape, gardens, orchard and play areas with the “tea” in order to build pesticide-free, nutrient-rich soil that will better sequester carbon from the air and save water.

“The goal of the compost tea party is to engage the community to eliminate petroleum-based fertilizers and glyphosate pesticides, which the World Health Organization concluded in 2015 probably cause cancer in humans,” said Florencia Ramirez, award-winning Oxnard author of the book *Eat Less Water*, and organizer of the event. “This new school is adjacent to the Santa Clara River, and so this is an opportunity to turn its playgrounds and gardens into healthy water catchment systems, because healthy soil that is untreated with chemicals can hold water up to 1,000 times more than treated soil. That is great news for our water-table levels and for the health of our rivers, which are polluted with nitrate runoff.”

In May the state ordered about 1,200 El Rio residents not to drink, cook or clean with their tap water for about a week due to nitrate contamination from a well.

“This event is important because it supports youngsters to learn how to take action in their world immediately, through education and nature-based solutions,” said principal Ralph Cordova, PhD. “Part of our school’s philosophy is to have strong community partnerships that are long-lasting, and this is an opportunity to begin a partnership that is grass-roots driven, where students are at the center of the work.”

In addition to preparing the compost tea, students will learn about soil science from David White, PhD., Executive Director of the Center for Regenerative Agriculture in Ojai. They will hear from Ron Whitehurst, owner of the world-renowned Rincon-Vitova Insectaries in Ventura, about how beneficial bugs can be used instead of pesticides.

Students, staff and volunteers will eat lunch made with locally-sourced ingredients planned by the district’s Child Nutrition Services. The local band “The Smashing Veggies,” featuring district superintendent John Puglisi, PhD., will perform. The school’s second graders will prepare organic sourdough bread from the student kitchen, to be enjoyed with accompaniments made by Oxnard High School culinary students.

“My students strive to develop a sense of community at our school by baking loaves of bread for other classes each week, and they will transfer this nurturing mindset into a study on

harmonious interactions with the local natural habitats of the Santa Clara River,” said Rio del Sol second grade teacher Rickey Koga.

Second grade student Jahlon Lewis, 8, is looking forward to making more bread. “I love it because the bread always turns out good no matter what. Crunchy or not, it’s very good.”

The event is made possible with financial support from Patagonia Environmental Grants and the New Tudor Foundation to the Encampment for Citizenship (EFC), a national non-profit created in 1946 to prepare young people to be informed, responsible and effective global citizens.

“Young people are eager to take action on the important issues of our time,” said Margot Gibney, Executive Director. “The Compost Tea Party provides both education and direct action to make school playgrounds pesticide-free.” Local EFC youth leaders are the lead organizers. “This type of event is important because it brings direct climate action to my community and opens the conversation for removal of pesticides in public spaces,” states Leticia Gutierrez, a local EFC leader.

This is the second compost tea party of the year on the Oxnard Plain. Rio Lindo Elementary School held the first one in July with the participation of 33 EFC youth from around the nation and community volunteers.

The Rio del Sol event runs from 8:30 a.m. to about noon. The school is located at 3001 N. Ventura Road, Oxnard.