



Youth help restaurants, business become water wise

[Tiffany Kwong](#) / Surrey Now

July 30, 2013 01:00 AM



From left, Kiran Toor, Jenny Liu and Sargun Bajaj with Operation Save H2O question/answer bottles. They are helping businesses become water wise. Photograph by: GORD GOBLE

From left, Kiran Toor, Jenny Liu and Sargun Bajaj with Operation Save H2O question/answer bottles. They are helping businesses become water wise. Photograph by: GORD GOBLE

University students who work with Surrey's Operation Save H2O initiative want businesses to be smarter about using water.

Jenny Liu, who studies natural resource conservation at the University of British Columbia (UBC), is leading the Water Wise Establishment campaign. She said one of the goals of the campaign is to get restaurants, businesses, and parks and recreation facilities to lower their water consumption and become water wise.

"(It's) the thought that consumers really do decide with their dollars what changes they want to see in their restaurants, so we thought if we roll out this (brand)... it would just become something that people can use as a reference point when deciding where to go," Liu said.

To get the certification involves an initial audit and goal-setting appointment with Operation Save H2O, putting up signage with facts about water use and tips for conservation, staff training and committing to annual follow-up meetings.

"If they pass the inspection, then we give them the water wise certification," Liu said, which includes an official certificate signed by the City of Surrey, a window decal and community recognition.

Miriam Marshall, a biologist and associate with Dillon Consulting who has worked

as project manager with Operation H2O since it began in 2008, told the Now that the Water Wise Establishment campaign began last year.

"We piloted it last year in restaurants and got rather positive feedback," Marshall said. "So now we're putting more focus and more resources into actually creating the full program."

In 2012, 11 restaurants completed the entire program, she said.

"As part of this year's program we will follow up with the restaurants that joined the program last year and assess to see if they have maintained the implemented measures and have started to move forward on the long-term water conservation measures," Marshall said.

If they have, then those restaurants can be upgraded to a gold certification.

"Hopefully this will bolster up the program and let people be aware that they really can make a difference by choosing," Liu said.

She hopes to get 50 restaurants under the water wise umbrella by December.

"I don't know how many restaurants I'll have to contact in order to make that happen," she said. "It's going to be... a lot of pushing on our end, but people should definitely look out for it."

Operation Save H2O's goal is to encourage all Surrey residents to conserve water and ultimately save money on their water bill. Since it started in 2008, the students who work with the program have visited nearly 9,000 homes to educate Surrey residents about their water consumption and how they can reduce it.

Jeff Arason, manager of utilities in the city's engineering department, said that the education strategy works.

"We've seen generally a 10-per-cent reduction in consumption (and it's an) ongoing reduction, not a one-time occurrence," he said. "Every cubic meter of water (residents) save, they save close to a dollar."

The City of Surrey provides water to more than 460,000 residents and, as the population grows, so does the demand on the water system. Currently, upgrading the city's water infrastructure would cost roughly \$63 million.

"That's our capital plan investment," said Arason. "\$63 million is the number (set aside for) infrastructure improvements (the city is) planning to make over the next 10 years to support growth."

But conservation is nonetheless important to preserve the resource, Arason said.

To join the mission to save water, check out the tips on the city website: <https://www.surrey.ca/city-services/4977.aspx> or scan this page with the Layar app.

© Copyright 2013

