

Young green minds fuelled by cash rewards

Nineteen groups receive funds to further ideas such as tricycle couriers, contest to end consumption of shark-fin soup

BY MIKE HAGER, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 7, 2011

Rooftop solar panels, tricycle couriers, an Iron Chef-like contest to stop the consumption of shark-fin soup, and a summer camp for locavores are a few of the sustainable ideas some enterprising young Vancouverites will now get the money to carry out.

Nineteen groups of young people recently won Generation Green awards for their commitment to building greener communities.

"Ultimately, it gives us the startup funds to really get this project off the floor so we can be sustainable -financially and environmentally," said Loretta Laurin, co-founder of SHIFT, a tricycle courier group that aims to make the delivery of larger packages more sustainable in the downtown core.

SHIFT was one of 11 larger projects awarded up to \$12,500 and eight smaller projects given \$1,250 by the Vancouver Foundation, the contest's charity sponsor. The contest was held in partnership with the city as part of its 125th anniversary celebrations.

"Young people often have some of the best ideas. I was really excited about the contest," said jury member Ryan Kadowaki, a senior climate change coordinator at the David Suzuki Foundation. "It sends an excellent message to young people thinking about sustainability.

"It's not necessarily far off; they can make it a reality in the short term."

The contest had a total of 110 submissions from three different age groups, ranging from six to 24 years old.

"There was definitely some heavy debate, there were some pretty strong projects in there and some tough decisions to make," Kadowaki said. "Renewable energy, waste reduction, groups looking at transportation -a whole range of sustainability issues was really well covered."

Winners, chosen by a jury of youth and environmental experts, now have until October to set up and finish their projects.

After the deadline, Vancouverites will be invited to choose the projects they would like to see expanded across their neighbourhoods.

The winning projects from the sixto-12 age group tended to focus on composting, recycling and growing different foods.

One project, led by 12-year-old Maja Lampa, aims to restore a bog near Beaver Lake in Stanley Park.

"I was going to help restore the bog and remove invasive species," Lampa said. "The bog is really special because one of the big things -I don't know if many people know this -is that bogs kind of filter all the toxins out of our water system.

"Without a bog, our water system would be falling apart."

Projects from older applicants coupled green thinking with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Loretta Laurin, 22, and her four business partners at SHIFT courier service will use their \$12,500 award to get a second tricycle on the road.

"Our goal is to replace the number of truck deliveries in the downtown core and provide skill building and employment opportunities for youth," Laurin said. "This is something that's mutually beneficial for businesses downtown, the cycling community and of course for the environment."

Claudia Li, 24, saw a way she could affect cultural and environmental change with her winning project.

Li did not understand why Chinese-Canadian couples were still serving shark-fin soup at their weddings.

"It's not an issue of culture, it's an issue of ecology," Li said. "Cultures are dynamic.

"Chinese people used to do foot binding, but we leave things that are unethical or unhealthy behind."

Li will use her \$12,500 to organize a competitive event where chefs try to create shark-fin soup alternatives, which couples can then choose to include in their weddings.

"Engaging this community in environmental change is very important," Li said. "As a Chinese-Canadian environmental advocate, the Vancouver Foundation is really investing in my future."

The winners will be acknowledged today at 10: 15 a.m. by the mayor at the Olympic Village's neighbourhood energy facility under the Cambie street bridge.

A complete list of winners will be posted at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/awards

mhager@postmedia.com [Twitter.com/MikePHager](https://twitter.com/MikePHager)