



ENVIRONMENTAL
LITERACY AND
SUSTAINABILITY
INITIATIVE

San Mateo County Office of Education

Sustainable and Climate Resilient Schools Challenge 2024-2025

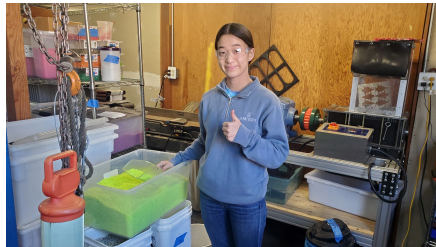
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Aragon High School San Mateo Union High School District

Zero Waste



Community & Culture



Pickle Puzzles is a sustainability initiative founded by Emily Ma with the aim of addressing the environmental impact of pickleball waste. Pickleballs, which are made of complex plastics, often crack and cannot be recycled through traditional systems. As pickleball became the fastest-growing sport in America, the waste problem associated with the sport's production of 500 million pickleballs annually grew more pressing. The project, in partnership with Peninsula Precious Plastics, upcycles broken pickleballs into useful products, reducing landfill waste and raising awareness about environmental conservation.

The initiative began by installing pickleball collection bins at local courts in Foster City, with approval from city staff. These bins collect cracked pickleballs, which are then sent to Peninsula Precious Plastics for upcycling. Each collection bin includes a QR code linking to resources about plastic waste, offering the community ways to learn about and mitigate their environmental impact. The project has diverted over 1,900 pickleballs (over 100 pounds of waste) from landfills.

Pickle Puzzles plans to expand its impact by implementing collection systems at additional pickleball courts. Ma aims to install bins at at least five more locations by the end of the year. They are also working on creating more products from the upcycled pickleballs, such as self-healing art mats. Additionally, the initiative hopes to provide old pickleballs to local Little League baseball teams for batting use.