



5 QUESTIONS with John Dilena SHB'73

Just like our 5 Questions subject in the Winter 2011 issue—Theresa Klatte Foster'79'75—John Dilena has been an integral part of the school Eco-Council since its inception. He is an alumnus of Stuart Hall for Boys and has two children at Convent & Stuart Hall: Jason (gr. 3) and Sofia (gr. 1).

1. What made you want to be actively involved with the schools' green efforts?

As parents and educators, we all want to provide a clean and safe indoor educational environment for our children and students. After spending the last several years converting our family business, Blue Ribbon Supply, to a US Green Building Council LEED certified distribution facility, it made sense for me to be available as a resource to help support our school's movement to a green and healthy school.

Blue Ribbon Supply (blueribbonsupply.com) was founded in 1958 and occupies a 40,000-square-foot office and distribution center in South San Francisco. It is one of the largest distributors of commercial cleaning supplies, vending brands, laundry, lodging products and equipment in the United States. We are dedicated to providing our customers with the most innovative and environmentally sustainable products, value and outstanding service.

2. What specific activities have you been involved in, or helped organize?

I assist customers in obtaining LEED and green certifications for their businesses. I've helped install solar photovoltaic systems and solar hot water systems through organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Grid Alternatives. My family has helped out at local shoreline cleanup days.

3. What do you think our biggest challenge is (at the schools) in terms of being good stewards of the environment?

We have a challenge in changing the mindset from a consumer throw-away mentality to a reuse-recycle mentality. While we can individually make changes, the challenge is to educate our current and future generations so that they may have a healthier planet to live on.

4. What's the best thing your kids have come home and told you they did at school that was eco-friendly?

They have learned how to recycle and know all about composting, which we've also practiced at home for several years. However, they now really understand what waste is. They've also helped plant our own garden and it's been great to see them get excited about eating the end product that they assisted in cultivating. I hear them saying things like, "It's better for the environment if I don't bathe too often," and that we should "pick up plastic bags so they don't end up in a landfill or the ocean"; I know they use potato/corn utensils that are compostable instead of plastic ones that end up in the landfill; they recycle our print paper by using both sides before it is put in the compost.

5. What are some of the easy ways we can be eco-thoughtful at home and with our own families?

Recycle and re-use. Teach your children the value of being thrifty. Buy locally. Support businesses that are environmentally friendly. Eat less meat. Grow your own fruit and vegetables (we've found our kids eat more of them this way).