

# Berkeleyside

## Berkeleyan wins cash for recycling, separates trash

May 11, 2011 1:37 pm by [Julia Musto](#)



Berkeley resident Deirdre McLoughlin won cash for her recycling skills. Photo: Liz Miles

A Berkeley resident is among the first to win a cash prize for her impeccable recycling skills.

Deirdre McLoughlin, who lives in central Berkeley, won \$50 in the [Ready Set Recycle competition](#) organized by StopWaste.Org, an initiative of the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board.

[StopWaste.Org](#) launched the contest on March 31 to run through June. The competition is designed to encourage and reward residents who “properly sort their household waste, placing recyclables in the recycle bin, compostables in the green bin, and as little material as possible into the garbage bin”.

Bay Area residents can prove their worth and win prizes worth up to \$500 in the competition. During garbage collection days, the Ready Set Recycle Prize Crew selects random garbage bins and separates the contents into recyclables, compostables, and garbage; the households with the least amount of recyclables and compostables are declared winners.

The Prize Crew notify residents that they are eligible by leaving a “hangtag” on their garbage can with contest information. Multiple winners are selected each week. There have been 25 winners to date, and McLoughlin is one of several from Berkeley.

McLoughlin was notified she was a winner last week. She offered advice for future contestants: “If you can really pay attention for the first few weeks, pretty soon it really will just become an easy habit that you won’t even notice. Frankly, the other trick is you need to have places in your home for separating the trash — we have the green bin under the sink, and a small box out of the way where we stack newspapers, mail, any scraps of paper.”

Asked what she thought about California’s recycling habits in general and within her community McLoughlin said: “The greatest thing I notice (being a New Jersey native and traveling quite a bit) is that recycling, and recycling everything we can — compost, cans, plastic, paper, etc — has become a way of life for the average Californian. It’s not a ‘hassle’ to do it.”

“I have also noticed a change in myself,” she added. “I do not think I would really self-identify as a strong environmentalist, although when I recently traveled to the Midwest, and in getting off the airplane, I noticed there were no recycling bins. I was shocked and carried my empty water bottle with me until we got to the hotel and I asked them to recycle it. It was amazing to me that there are still parts of the country that do not participate in something so simple for us.”

Jeff Becerra, Senior Communications Manager at StopWaste.Org, said the idea of doing a contest came from StopWaste.Org staff as a way to increase and reward recycling in Alameda County. Alameda County is one of the greenest counties in the country. It currently diverts 69% of its trash from landfill.

“I live in Alameda. It seems to me that living ‘green’ is a high priority for people throughout the Bay Area, including Alameda,” he said. “[Because of the contest] I have been recycling more and more of my food scraps and I’ve seen the volume of my trash go down considerably. More than 20 years ago Alameda County residents voted in their own mandate of diverting 75% of recyclable and compostable materials from the landfill. Our hope is that the Ready Set Recycle contest will increase recycling in the county and help us achieve that goal.”

For more information on Ready Set Recycle, [visit StopWaste.Org](http://www.stopwaste.org).

