

Lafayette environmentalist pens book for kids about Earth Hour



Photo provided

Nanette Heffernan dons a suit made from a weeks' worth of plastic bags.

By Kara Navolio

When Nanette Heffernan, a 25-year resident of Lafayette, was driving across the Golden Gate Bridge on the last Saturday evening of March 2015 all the lights went out. The eerie darkness made her believe there had been a power outage, but later she learned that it was part of a global event called Earth Hour. She did not know it then, but the environ-

mental activist would soon take this experience as inspiration for a children's picture book called "Earth Hour: A Lights-Out Event for Our Planet" (Charlesbridge, 2020).

Earth Hour, sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund, occurs each year on the last Saturday in March at 8:30 p.m. local time across the planet. Lights are turned off for one hour as a pledge for what each individual plans to do for

the environment in the next year. Monuments across the globe also go dark from the Eiffel Tower to the Great Wall of China, and from the Sydney Opera House to the International Space Station.

Writing about Earth Hour was a natural fit for Heffernan, who has spent over 20 years working with kids and with environmental causes. She has worked with Sustainable Lafayette, Sustainable Contra Costa and the Lafayette School District's Green Team. She also leads an active, outdoors-loving Girl Scout troop, which participates in community service related to the environment. While a parent volunteer at Springhill Elementary School, Heffernan was a parking lot traffic guide at drop-off time. She would wear fun hats as a way to keep the atmosphere relaxed. One day she noticed all the trash in the school's dumpster, mostly plastic from kids' lunches. She decided to make a hat from one week's worth of plastic bags. However, one week's worth of plastic bags was too much for just a hat; it evolved into a complete suit! With the principal's support, Heffernan led a waste-free lunch initiative, and the school reduced its plastic trash by 50%. Heffernan used the trash suit to lead the Earth Day Festival parade. She now brings it along on author visits when discussing her book.

"Earth Hour: A Lights-Out Event for Our Planet" was celebrated with a Launch Party

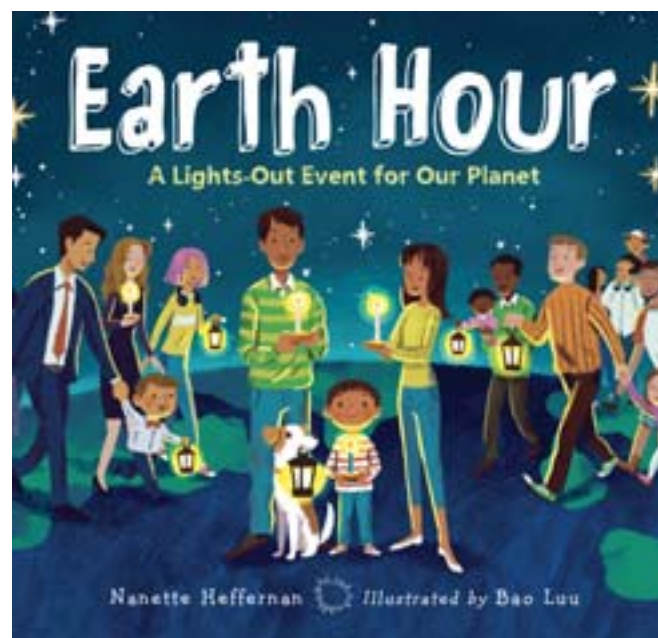
at Bel & Bunna's Books on Jan. 26. Supporters were also offered the opportunity to buy a book for a Bay Area Title 1 school, another of Heffernan's passions. The Dailey Method also hosted events (called Barre and Bubbles) and donated studio space to help raise donations to Heffernan's Title 1 book drive. Each of the 150 books donated so far also comes with a free virtual author visit for the school via Zoom. Her author visits at schools are often accompanied by hands-on, interactive activities to help kids understand the impact we all have on the environment. "Children are empowered to learn what a difference it makes when you carpool or take a bus versus everyone driving individually in cars," Heffer-

nan said.

Signed copies of the book are available at Bel & Bunna's Books and Orinda Books. Heffernan can also be seen in her trash suit, reading her book and leading a solar lantern making craft at Flashlight Books in Walnut Creek on March 18 and Mrs. Dalloway's in Berkeley on March 21. Visit her website nanetteheffernan.com for more future events or to learn about school visits or donating a book to Title 1 schools.

"I hope that children learn that even their activities, as one person, all add up and make a difference," added Heffernan.

Don't forget to turn off the lights at 8:30 p.m. on March 28 and make your pledge to help the environment.



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LAMORINDA Idol

2020 details and registration
www.LamorindaArts.org
March 21-April 22, 2020

Registration is open to all Lamorinda students or residents.
Groups can include members outside Lamorinda.
For inquiries email us at idol@lamorindaarts.org

Cash prizes are awarded for winners in each category.

K - 2 nd grade soloists - \$200	K - 5 th grade groups - \$200
3 rd - 5 th grade soloists - \$300	6 th - 8 th grade groups - \$300
6 th - 8 th grade soloists - \$500	9 th - 12 th grade groups - \$500
9 th - 12 th grade soloists - \$750	Audience Award - \$300

MANY THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS:

Thinking about graduate or professional school? Think about how to pay for it

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

As you consider a graduate or professional school program, think about how you will cover costs. If you are already in the workforce, are you willing to work full-time while pursuing a degree part-time? Your work experience might help you to succeed in the classroom, and your employer might offer (paid or unpaid) time off from work to study for exams and complete assignments. However, prior to accepting these incentives, be sure to understand if there is any obligation to remain with that employer longer than you might want both during your education and after. Take care to scrutinize what is involved before making and/or agreeing to a proposal.

But what if you're still in college, have graduated but are not currently employed, or you are not working in a field that is related to the advanced degree that you want to pursue? Or what if the program that you want, such as the MD or DO requires a commitment to full-time study? Outside of personal or family funds, fellowships for the best qualified PhD candidates, and scholarships tied to military service or other community service, the most likely aid will come in the form of

student loans. The most selective doctoral programs offer fellowships to the most qualified applicants. The fellowships cover tuition and fees as well as a stipend for teaching or research. But law schools, business schools and advanced degree programs in the allied health professions offer few scholarships. Dental, medical and veterinary schools offer practically none, except on rare occasion to highly qualified candidates.

Students and their families can borrow more for an advanced degree than they did for college. For example, the Federal Direct Student Loan program allows borrowers to borrow up to \$20,500 each year toward an advanced degree, and up to \$40,500 toward the costs of the MD, but none of the interest, regardless of the borrower's income, is subsidized. Borrowers or their families must pay the interest while in school, or it is capitalized, and added to the loan balance to be repaid after graduation. The Federal Grad Plus student loan program allows students to borrow for the total cost of their education, less other loans and aid. The interest for these loans is also unsubsidized. Private loans are also available, but interest rates are likely to be higher, and repayment terms less lenient.

Loan forgiveness programs offered by organizations such as the National Health Service Corps are available, but their future is in question due to the present administration's education leadership. These programs are noteworthy, because they eliminate a portion of the debt in return for service in a community of need. However, the Trump Administration has proposed that these programs be closed to new borrowers, while income-based repayment, where debts may be extended for as long as 25 years and the balance forgiven at the end, is likely to continue.

The process of applying for financial aid for graduate school is similar to the one you might have gone through when applying for aid to help cover college costs; but there are some differences. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is still required, but only the student information ap-

pears on the form. If the student is a college senior, work study income is excluded. If the student has worked since college, their primary residence, retirement savings, military combat pay, insurance and personal property are excluded in estimating financial need. Only income and liquid assets are considered. The CSS Profile may also be required, but again, only student information is required. Financial aid offices will use this information to develop their own calculation of need, which will be different from school to school. The colleges may also ask for more financial information that does not appear on either form, not only from the student, but also the applicant's parents.

Graduate and professional schools require a hefty commitment of time and money. Before you begin to tackle the applications and financial aid processes, be sure to have a goal worthy of the commitment and a plan in place to bring it to fruition.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; or Call: 925.385.0562.

Graduate and Professional School Admissions Advisor

Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, has decades of admissions expertise and has guided hundreds of individuals to apply successfully to the most prestigious school and programs in the US and abroad. Elizabeth works along with a team of expert consultants in the sciences, engineering, humanities, medicine, business, and law to help you manage the process, one step at a time. Her professional team offers access to the finest test preparation, resume and personal statement development and much more.

Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Founder, Doing College and Beyond
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(925) 385-0562

elizabeth@doingcollege.com
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