

SAN GABRIEL VALLEY TRIBUNE

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Kids going green, JPL electric shuttles win clean air awards

By Steve Scauzillo, 10/03/15

My environmental heroes are usually not hoisting trophies.

Take recycling. I'd give out awards to all those guys who collect bottles and cans and push shopping carts into supermarket parking lots and feed redemption machines one soda can at a time. Bravo!

And no, you're probably right, **Elon Musk** doesn't need an award. But last week he unveiled his next all-electric car, the Tesla Model X. This is an 260-mile-range SUV that goes from zero to 60 mph in a little more than 3 seconds.

Musk is shattering the misconception that electric cars are slow or uncool.

On Friday, the South Coast Air Quality Management District named their clean-air winners.

Worth mentioning:

- **Robert Weisenmiller** of the California Energy Commission. That is an agency on the cutting edge of cleaner fuels, including one day moving toward all-electric trains, buses and yes, cars. Now, Robert, if we only had more public charging stations.
- I've never heard of **Global Inheritance**, I admit, but I like the name. Our children and grandchildren will inherit our planet. That is a sobering thought. So this group uses education to get people exposed to making more low-carbon, low-emissions choices. Video games with environmental themes. Sure beats those games focused on murder and mayhem.
- **Phoenix Motorcars** is a company based in Ontario that makes all-electric shuttle buses. What a great idea! All those hotel, airport, parking lot and amusement park shuttles should run on battery power. It's cleaner and not having to breathe in those fumes is a major plus. They call their shuttle the Zero Emissions Utility Shuttle or **ZEUS**. ZEUS dominates at 105 airport parking lots, including LAX, and takes those rocket scientists from their lab to their cars at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in La Cañada Flintridge. Hey, building electric vehicles, especially fleets, is no longer rocket science.

- Even the **Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority** (Metro) got a clean-air nod. They are building five new or expanded rail lines and run 2,200 buses on something other than diesel. Next rail line to run is the Gold Line Foothill from east Pasadena to the Azusa/Glendora border. The thing is built. It is now up to Metro. If I drove the 210 Freeway everyday (yikes!) I'd be buying my TAP card and writing Metro asking when I can board.
- For the kids and adults of **Legacy LA** and its project at Ramona Gardens in Boyle Heights, an honor well deserved. People who are unemployed or underemployed often don't have the time to fight for clean air or to get that company down the street to stop spewing toxic chemicals. Legacy LA built a Youth Council program made up of 14-to-18-year-olds who can mix it up with politicians and government leaders and demand change.
- Finally, another education group, **Grades of Green**, also was honored. The group teaches kids how to recycle, compost, reduce emissions, save electricity, save water, reduce trash and more. The program, started by four moms in 2010, is active in 41 states and has involved 225,000 students from 329 schools, including many located within the South Coast Air Basin.

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