

Being green seems to be the new trend in today's society, and everyone wants to know what cool gadgets one can buy to instantly make his or her household or school more environmentally friendly. However, we at Staples High School care about more than being en vogue, and so we want to go behind a simple plea for money to purchase eco-friendly items. We have already made numerous investments to become more environmentally friendly. Staples has an organic garden, recycling bins at the football field, in addition to the rest of the school and hazardous waste recycling. Also, our buses run on bio-diesel fuels, we vigorously distribute CL&P tm Clean Energy Sign-Ups around our community, host an Eco Fest, collaborate with GVI, and actively participate in community service projects to help the environment. Rather than just letting our ambitions end on the school-wide level, we want to influence our entire town.

The solution is the sun. That is, promoting solar energy. We have talked to a green living consultant, and he has already drawn up a plan for solar panels to be placed all over the roof of our high school. Unfortunately, the town is not big on the idea, and we feel that this is largely due to a misunderstanding of what installing solar panels would actually entail. The town would not have to purchase anything. Rather, a private solar energy company would pay to install the system, and they would continue to own the system. They would merely be using our extensive roof space. Because they would be profiting from our space, they would reciprocate by selling the electricity that they produce to Westport at a reduced rate, saving the town money. While this would be our selling point, the true interest for us, of course, would be the positive effects of such a system for the environment. The system on Staples would produce approximately 800

kW of electricity, which is quite a substantial amount, therein helping us lessen our dependence on the fossil fuels that are polluting our world.

Trying to push our town towards greener forms of energy has always been one of our major goals. In fact, it is the principle that our club was founded upon. We have been instrumental in helping to sign up over 450 households in our community for CL&P's Clean Energy Options™. Now, we want to go one step further by getting our entire town to show support for the green energy movement through the installation of solar panels on a public building. Westport has proven to be very receptive to new ideas and change, and last April became the second city in the United States to ban plastic bags. We have faith that they will similarly support our endeavor if it is presented properly, and if we can show that there is a support platform for such a project.

Unfortunately, we lack the funds to make such a presentation, which is why we are applying for this grant. Changing the mindset of our local government will not be easy, and we will need to put money towards creating posters and pamphlets and holding forums. In addition, we would want to re-focus the goal of Eco Fest, a hugely popular free festival that we held last year to support green causes. We were fortunate enough to have a corporate sponsor fund the event last year, but we cannot assume that we will be so lucky again. If we won this contest, we would put about \$7,000 towards the production of our festival. The festival would be focused on generating support in the town for our proposal to obtain solar panels on Staples High School. With any luck, we will be able to start a movement that the town will have a hard time refusing.

We realize that this is a lofty goal, but we believe that real change can only come from dreaming big. We view the negative effects of carbon emissions as one of modern

society's greatest enemies, and so we want to directly combat it by equipping our school with the tools to bring cleaner energy to our town. We know that our goal is a good one, and we believe that our town is not currently supporting us simply due to a lack of understanding, an understanding that we hope to bring once we launch our campaign. Please, give us the funds that we need to make such a crusade a reality.

While our focus is to bring solar power to Staples, we have other ambitions for our school that are being held back due to a lack of financial support. We were fortunate enough to find funding to install a new edible garden at our school. The town is working towards installing edible gardens at different schools throughout Westport and we plan to allocate a portion of the funds to future gardens. Another hope is that we will be able to purchase a composting system to go in our cafeteria, a device that costs between \$3,000 and \$4,000. Not only will such a mechanism reduce the amount of waste going into landfills and enrich our soil, but it will also instill a sense of civic responsibility in our student population that will hopefully transcend into all areas of their lives, encouraging them to live green forever. We have all of these ambitions and more, now we just ask you to give us the financial support that we need.