



Bellarmino College Preparatory

19 August 2009

Series Review

Title: *Eco Company*

Episodes reviewed: 101, 102, 104

Program length: 30 minutes each.

Eco Company brings a fresh, engaging, and optimistic perspective to environmental issues through interviews and conversational reportage that is accessible, relevant, and compelling. The program's energetic and youthful journalist/hosts present stories that promote an action-oriented approach to environmental issues by 1) showcasing examples of creative solutions, many of which are implemented by teenagers themselves; and 2) delivering information that promotes and encourages ethical stewardship of natural resources and the environment. Engaging, upbeat music and eco-friendly facts and tips complement the feature stories.

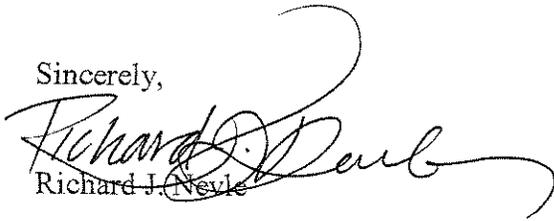
The first episode is packed with thought-provoking and informative stories that both explain the basic science of global climate change and illustrate innovative solutions to the climate challenge devised by scientists and high school students. One story takes viewers on a field trip to the California Academy of Sciences rainforest exhibit to learn about the benefits provided by rainforests to Earth's climate system and explains why protecting rainforest ecosystems from further degradation is so crucial. A story on a biofuel startup shows viewers around the company's laboratory, where algae are employed to produce crude oil (and cooking oil) from biomass waste, and describes how biofuels can potentially reduce the input of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. At the end of the story, one of the company's founders delivers an inspiring message to *Eco Company's* viewers: our nation needs the hearts and minds of its young people to contribute to solutions that will help solve the world's major environmental challenges. The episode concludes with a story about a group of high school students who have taken on this charge by transforming an unused piece of school property into a vibrant vegetable garden, where they've begun to experiment with organic gardening methods. The students explain how organic gardening can help people reduce their carbon footprint, a concept emphasized in the first story of the episode.

The other episodes I reviewed are equally brimming with informative and inspiring stories that illustrate inventive solutions to environmental challenges. Stories feature an artist-educator who creates beautiful works of wearable art from recycled candy wrappers (including a stunning matador's outfit fashioned from m&m wrappers!); a chef who has transformed the menu of a middle school cafeteria (supplemented by the cafeteria's own kitchen herb garden) to provide healthful, organic food for students' lunches; and a high school environmental group that used recycling proceeds to create a native plant garden that has become a sanctuary for both students – who can relax on benches made from recycled materials – and an endangered species (the Western Bluebird) that nests in a birdhouse overlooking the garden.

Eco Company relates stories of ordinary people, who by leveraging a bit of creativity and a can-do attitude have helped address global environmental challenges on a local level. The take-home message for *Eco Company's* audience is an empowering one: young people can make an important and significant difference through personal actions to address environmental challenges. The upbeat, journalistic narratives in *Eco Company* focus on issues of major global environmental significance (resource, energy and water consumption; environmental toxins; environmental activism), which complement in the curricula of Advanced Placement Environmental Science and other high school science and social studies classes.

One of the challenges of teaching young people about environmental problems is helping them gain perspective on how individual and collective actions can address critical challenges affecting the environment. Unfortunately, it is all too easy for students to sink into a sense of despair, pessimism, or powerlessness when they encounter the magnitude of environmental destruction wrought by humanity. The stories presented in *Eco Company* – through offering tangible examples that can help students understand how their decisions and actions have real and positive environmental benefits – offers a hopeful alternative to this view. As such, the stories contained in the episodes I reviewed would be a welcome supplement to teaching about environmental issues in a high school setting.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Nevele

Reviewer: Richard J. Nevele

Contact Information

537 North 18th Street
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 275-1850

Educational Background

Amherst College (1987), B.A. Geology, *Magna cum laude*
Stanford University (1995), Ph.D. Geological and Environmental Sciences

Current Teaching & Research Activities

Bellarmino College Preparatory, San José, California –

- Teacher (calculus, physics, geology)
- Assistant Coach, cross country

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California –

- Lecturer, Department of Physics

Stanford University, Stanford, California

- Visiting Scholar (Conduct research in prehistoric human-landscape interactions using geological methods.)