



DTSC Helps Preschool Grow in Portola

BY BARBARA ZUMWALT | APRIL 2018

A former plant nursery has become a new nursery school, with a little help from the [California Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) (DTSC).

DTSC administered a \$156,000 subgrant to Windmill School and Family Education Center in Portola Valley to pay for the removal of toxic chemicals left behind from a plant nursery operation, clearing the way for a new school site. Children ages 2-5 can play free of exposure to residue from years of fertilizer and pesticide use on the 1.68-acre campus, replete with a redwood grove and spacious gardens.



The site currently occupied by Windmill School was once Al's Nursery.

“This important project could not have happened without a partnership with [San Mateo County Environmental Health](#),” said Mohsen Nazemi, Deputy Director of the DTSC Site Mitigation and Restoration Program. “DTSC was able to provide key funding which allowed the project to go forward. DTSC staff reviewed work plans and reports, conducted site oversight along with San Mateo County, and provided input to San Mateo County Environmental Health staff.”

The school and its benefactors had already paid to remove pesticide contamination, including dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), chlordane, and dieldrin, from much of the site. But a 170-foot underground drain pipe filled with contaminated soil sediment remained, and its removal was too costly for the 60-year-old nonprofit school.

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Left: A drain leads to a lengthy portion of pipe that had carried pesticides away from the old Al's Nursery site. The cleanup included flushing out the pipe and packing it with controlled-density fill.

Middle: The new campus, near completion, turned an under-utilized property into a vital community asset.

Right: Windmill students were excited to have classes at the new campus starting in February 2018.





DTSC Subgrant (continued)

< **PREVIOUS** This is where DTSC came in, administering a subgrant through its Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Program. With the funds, the pipe was flushed and packed with controlled-density fill. Lim Barnett in the Grants and Program Support Branch administered DTSC's funding, and staff at the DTSC office in Berkeley coordinated with Windmill School's Karen Tate and the San Mateo County Department of Environmental Health to ensure the project met the standards for funding and cleanup.

The funds came from a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant to DTSC, which in turn provides subgrants to remediate abandoned toxic sites, turning them into beneficial places for the communities around them. DTSC has cleaned up thousands of acres of brownfields in California to create new housing, offices, businesses, and jobs.

San Mateo County Environmental Health approved the final cleanup plan. Windmill School opened its new campus in February 2018. Plans are to also offer summer school and summer day camps there, and eventually to add enrichment programs for children from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Providing the subgrant and guidance is one way DTSC is meeting its mission of turning brownfields green and improving the lives and health of the people of California.