

# Toyota TogetherGreen

by Audubon

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## Emily Sadigh

Alameda County Sustainability

Berkeley, California

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MEDIA



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## Turning an Organization Into an Ecosystem to Engage Employees in Conservation

Though biomimicry is a field even seasoned environmentalists might be unfamiliar with, to Emily Sadigh, its approach is the key to a sustainable human relationship with our planet. Biomimicry – learning from and emulating nature’s remarkably efficient designs in order to solve human problems – has enabled breakthroughs in product and building design. Emily was so taken by the power of this approach that she is pursuing a certificate in the field from the Biomimicry Institute. Emily believes applying biomimicry to a new arena, organizational change, will provide insight into how to create an ecosystem of participation. Just as life’s strategies build on what works and rely on cooperative relationships, so too can organizations apply nature’s way of managing to create self-organizing networks of employees engaged in conservation.

From rehabilitating wildlife as a teenager, to becoming founding coordinator of Harvard University’s peer-to-peer Resource Efficiency Program, to a current position as Sustainability Project Manager for Alameda County, CA, Emily has focused on grassroots action in response to environmental challenges. Emily received her A.B. in anthropology and Ed.M. in adult education for sustainability from Harvard University, and both her studies and years advising budding entrepreneurs as a board member of Young Women Social Entrepreneurs-SF have equipped her to create personal transformations that have a ripple effect toward broader cultural change.

For Emily, her TogetherGreen fellowship helped her to integrate the areas of expertise she’s developed so far. Her project aimed to make it easier for the 9,000 employees of Alameda County to take energy and habitat conservation actions that involve connecting with others, such as carpooling, turning off shared equipment when not in use, ordering produce from local farms, and ensuring that departments buy green products. As part of her project, employee volunteer “green ambassadors” in the 20 county agencies will serve as hubs for local sustainability action teams, create channels for rapid feedback, and share stories from other participants.

Emily’s enthusiastic pilot groups were trained in the opportunities to be green at work and informally shared the information with colleagues in their departments. By just spending 2-3 hours a month promoting a featured green action, the pilot participants were able to impact office emissions. Suggested improvements included choosing office supply products with recycled content, smart printing, and clean commuting. The sustainable action team also contributed to designing the Green Ambassadors network based on the principles life uses to survive and thrive on earth, such as being locally attuned and self-organizing. Her “Green Ambassadors” initiative continues to thrive through the work of her passionate pilot team.