

# The Rye Sound Shore Review

## **Milton students leaving their footprints**

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Everyone wants to do something to help the environment, and the students at the Milton School have spent the past two years being very proactive for the cause.

Just as it did two years ago, the school invited the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF) to come by and measure the school's ecological footprint, and the difference over the two years was eye opening.

"The ecological footprint is a resource management tool that measures how much land and water area a human population (or institution or company) requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes. It is an excellent measurement tool for students to understand how their school functions, as well as how their collective actions and behaviors contribute to the health of the environment," says Katie Ginsberg, Executive Director for CELF. "It was exciting to return to the Milton School for the second time to assess their progress since the first footprinting program and share the students' sense of accomplishment as they discovered the improvements since the action plan was implemented 18 months ago."

Mimi Bateman, a Milton parent who organized the event, was proud to report that the school was doing 11 percent better than it had in 2006. Major improvements were made in energy, recycling and changes in the cafeteria.

"With paper usage, we are doing much better," Bateman says. "We cut back significantly on the number of flyers that go home in backpacks. It's a significant savings and if we continue to do the little things, collectively we can make a difference."

When it comes to recycling, Milton now has 75 percent of its paper and 95 percent of its bottles/cans being recycled.

"That has improved greatly and is one of the reasons why we were able to have such an impact on the decrease of the school's footprint," Bateman says. "We don't just recycle paper, but plastic, bottles, printer cartridges, computers, and we take donations of cell phones and light bulbs."

The transportation sector, which takes in to account the impact of all the visitors who come to the school on a daily basis, also had an improved score. Things factored in include looking at whether people are walking or biking compared to driving in cars, carpooling and keeping cars from idling when they are waiting.

"The school also installed insulation around all the boiler room pipes and a resource maximizing computer on the boiler so the school was able to significantly reduce its energy

consumption," Ginsberg says. "Through water saving devices installed last year and raised awareness of the issue, water consumption was tremendously reduced from last time."

The three-hour assembly taught the children other ways to practice environmentally friendly actions and made them think about ways in which they could help.

"The Ecological Footprinting assembly is important to our school because it puts the world into perspective for the students," says fifth grade teacher Tom Bailey. "When they have the opportunity to see the impact that we as a school are having on the world, it makes the damage we've created much more concrete."

Many parents volunteered to speak about some of these issues and there were stations and projects set up for the kids to learn about different aspects of what they could do.

"The biggest impression was made on these young students when we explained that, as a result of reducing the school's ecological footprint, this otherwise consumed acreage was freed up to support habitats for wildlife; forests to absorb further carbon and provide a wildlife habitat; resources for poor communities; and/or support the development and production of renewable energy," Ginsberg says. "Giving them concrete examples of how their savings impacts others makes the outcome more real and relevant and their pride was evident. There were many smiles among the kids and especially the teachers and parent volunteers and a nice round of applause."

One of the most popular stations was in the computer lab where students could go to a website and calculate their own personal ecological footprint and find areas where they could improve.

"My hope is that the kids come away with the understanding that this is their world, and what they do now has an impact on it later," Bailey says. "If they are able to make changes now to reduce their impact on the earth, hopefully they will get in the habit of doing so, and in the process create a positive change and a smaller footprint. The kids also get to see that there are things they can do to help the community and world, and that even small things like riding your bike, recycling and reusing, and composting can have a great effect on the world when multiplied by thousands of people."