

Waste Not, Want Not, Pleasantville Sixth-Graders Learn

By Sam Barron

There are just as many ways to conserve natural resources as there are to waste them, as sixth-graders at Pleasantville Middle School learned last Friday during a daylong program designed to increase the students' awareness of the school's ecological footprint.

The program, offered by the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELFF), was led by science teacher Sara Keegan. A grant from the Pleasantville Fund for Learning funded the program.

At the event, students studied different parts of the middle school and the energy consumed by each. By the end of the day, they made a presentation to classmates offering short- and long-term goals on reducing the ecological footprint of the building.

Proposals included changing to automatic faucets and starting a competition between grades that would bring the most reusable water bottles to school.

Students also discovered that in New York City, seven million gallons of gas are wasted from idling cars, an issue at Pleasantville Middle School as well since so many students are driven to school.

Students proposed posting a carpool list and scheduling Walk to School Wednesdays as a way to help the environment. They also learned that 30 pounds of food each day is wasted at the school's cafeteria. One student proposed reducing homework as



Pleasantville Middle School sixth-graders visited their school's boiler room, one of several places where they learned about the building's ecological footprint and issues that affect the environment.

a way to save paper.

Middle School Principal Vivian Ossowski praised the students for their work and hoped they would take the lessons learned home to practice with their families.

"You were polite, accountable, well mannered and safe," Ossowski said. "Tell your parents something you learned today and maybe make a suggestion."

Ossowski said middle school is the perfect time to teach students about their ecological footprint and conserving resources.

"At this age they are so open minded," she said. "They are starting to think about their place in the world. This is a wonderful way to teach them to take ownership and responsibility."

Helen Meurer, a member of Pleasantville's

Conservation Advisory Council and a volunteer at the event, said she enjoyed seeing how the students were absorbing so much about the environment.

"The sooner they learn about this, the sooner they are aware," Meurer said. "It's nice for them to learn good habits and good information at an early age."

Ossowski said she would like to see the program be a permanent part of the sixth-grade curriculum, but is also pleased the students learn about the environment in the school's annual seventh-grade trip.

"This was a great day," Ossowski said. "The children got a lot out of it."

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