

GODDARD STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN EARTH HOUR TO LEARN ABOUT CONSERVATION

by Dona Dreeland Staff Writer • March 24, 2011



Teachers Natalie Capuano, left, and Kelly Baiert, right, explain the papermaking process as students, from left, Ryan, Dominic, Ethan, Evan and Max, do the work of pressing the water out. Jackson, in back, works on another activity. (Photo by Dona Dreeland)

Good habits begin early.

That's what administrators and teachers hope at The Goddard School® in Cranberry Township and Pine Township as they participate in the upcoming Earth Hour Friday, from 10 to 11 a.m., all non-essential lighting will be switched off in both buildings, and students will reflect on their week's worth of environmentally conscious activities.

Worldwide, Earth Hour, which was inaugurated in Sydney, Australia, in 2007, will be observed on Saturday from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. For one hour, homes, businesses, government offices and landmarks in more than 100 countries will go dark.

What the event offers people across the globe is an opportunity to heighten awareness of our energy usage and the earth's limited resources.

"Kids like to be helpful," said Mark Rebstock, 53, of Irwin, franchise co-owner with his wife Jennifer at the Wexford location since January 2008.

"Kids like to be recognized for being helpful."

He's seen that as children clean up their own spaces after they've eaten. He's certain he'll see that again as the children participate in earth-friendly lessons.

"Being helpful" translated to a broader scale as his students and those at the Goddard School in Cranberry, owned by Dina and Matt Speranza since August 2008, learned fun facts as they progressed through a week of lessons.

Speranza and her teachers planned special classroom exercises that focused on recycling either through use of a Smart Board for interactive instructions; actual separation of plastic, paper and metals; or reuse of items, such as empty water bottles fashioned into maracas.

"Why are there bunnies in the park?" asked Miss Melissa of her kindergarten students.

The park was getting cleaner, so wildlife returned when individual students "virtually" moved a piece of trash into its proper container.

Soon goldfish appeared on the screen, happily swimming in fresher water.

Each of the Cranberry classrooms was engaged in some kind of activity that spotlighted care for the natural world. Three-year-olds made birdfeed balls with Miss Jen, while Miss Missy helped her 18- to 24-month-old students plant flower seeds in paper cups.

“At the corporate level, Goddard has a focus on ‘*Stepping up for the Environment*,’” said Speranza, 38, of Valencia, “which encourages community awareness.”

Last year, her staff touched upon the topic.

“It was successful enough to do again,” she said, adding that the whole school was involved in this year’s program.

Her staff planned a children’s fashion show for the 3-year-olds, who modeled dresses and hats made of paper bags, and the construction of a recyclable city made of discarded cardboard packaging.

Also on the agenda is actual recycling of juice boxes, drink pouches and more that will be sorted during lunchtime for the “Healthy Environment for Healthy Babies” event. Any money earned from selling these items will be donated to the March of Dimes, she explained.

During tomorrow’s lights-out hour on the Wexford campus, students will welcome Julie Bologna, WPXI-TV meteorologist, who will plant a tree. Rebstock also is hoping to coordinate a call with a school in India, so students can discuss environmental topics via Skype.

And on the school’s helper chart, someone will be designated the “Lightning Bug.” That student will make sure lights always are turned off in classrooms that are not being used.

If students grow up with turning lights off and recycling, they’ll become environmentally friendly, Rebstock said. Even in the multi-disasters of the people in Japan, there have been news reports of people taking time to recycle in the shelters.

“That’s what we’re working toward,” he said. “That’s how they’re brought up.”

In Cranberry, Goddard students will participate in a one-hour assembly when they will talk about the week’s special activities, sing songs and tell stories.

“Parents are amazed when their 2-and-a-half-year-old uses words like conservation,” Speranza said.

But a week’s worth of activities doesn’t make a lifestyle.

“The key to making (change) happen is the follow-up the week after and the week after that,” Rebstock said.

“If we forget, they will, too. If everybody goes back to normal, then what’s the point?”