

COMMUNITY

Last school in 4J starts recycling

Whiteaker kids learn to recycle

By June Russell
Emerald Reporter

When school started in September, the energy conservation and recycling programs of the Eugene 4J School District went into action at all schools but one.

While other students monitored energy use, and Weyerhaeuser picked up bins of papers students had sorted, students at Whiteaker Elementary in north Eugene had no recycling program.

Two University students set out to change that.

"The kids were just really ignorant about it," said Amy Hope, an elementary education major and one of the founders of the Whiteaker program. "First we had to teach the kids how to recycle with games and showing them how to do it."

Teaching students to recycle wasn't easy, Hope said, and teachers who treat recycling as unimportant or time-consuming make teaching kids to recycle even more difficult.

"Educating the kids was a long process," Hope said. "You have to reiterate all the time. Teaching it the first time is the hardest, because it's like a new subject for them."

"A few teachers are reluctant to recycle," Hope added. "They think of it as a chore. They won't encourage the kids to recycle or recycle themselves, so a lot of the classes aren't recycling as much as they can."

"I'd say the majority of teachers aren't into recycling," she added. "They think of it as a hobby, not a necessity."

University student Brian Rippet, Hope's partner in the recycling program, said the degree of recycling and the number of boxes in each classroom depends on the grades level. Third, fourth and fifth graders do the most sophisticated sorting of papers, and have three boxes in each of their rooms. But every class recycles.

"In the other grades we just have one box for colored and one for everything else," Rippet said. "It's too hard for



Photo by Eric Evans

Amy Hope helps Whiteaker Elementary students learn to sort and recycle.

them to figure out where different papers go."

After teaching the students in every grade from kindergarten through fifth to recycle, Hope and Rippet organized an after-school recycling club to sort the bins from individual classrooms into the 55-gallon barrels Weyerhaeuser collects about once or twice a month.

"We had our first meeting, and at that point it was kind of still trial and error," Hope said. "We had all kinds of things in the bins, like trash and chocolate chips, and the paper hadn't been sorted right."

But the kids are learning, and enjoying it. For them, recycling is a fun way to make friends and save the environment.

"You get to bring boxes from all over the school, and then sort the papers — that's what's fun," said Linda Okeke, a student at Whitaker. "Also, you learn to take care of the planet."

"When you come to recycling club you see all your

friends here, and make new friends," student Melissa Blandon said. "What I like is that you can find treasures in the bins when kids throw in other stuff with the papers."

Rippet said the amount of recycled paper appearing in the bins is growing.

"We have noticed that there's more recycled paper getting recycled, and it's cool that there's a market for recycled paper," Rippet said.

"The greatest thing is just seeing the kids' reaction and how they get into it," Rippet said. "I like to see how some of them take charge and lead it." In addition to developing leadership skills, the students learn important conservation skills, which is the most rewarding aspect of the program, Hope said.

"It's just 100 percent rewarding to see that these kids will be recycling for the rest of their lives," Hope said. "I feel like I got the whole thing started."

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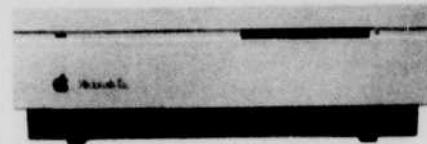
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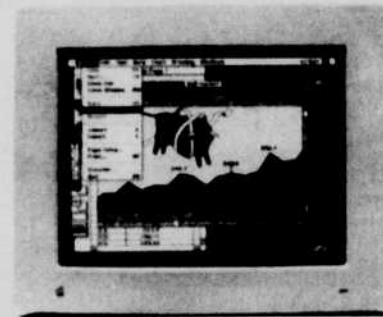
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