

Up Front on Sustainability

Students look for ways to reduce carbon footprint

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When I stepped into the Jefferson High School gym, the playing floor was occupied by a series of tables and booths devoted to various environmental resources and concerns. I am directed to a row of tables, behind each of which is a student.

I take a seat and a young man takes me through a survey of my personal habits. He is polite and easy-going, but I soon find my own truthful answers embarrassing – No, I don't use low-flow plumbing; no, I don't garden; I drive far more frequently than I use any other means of travel.

When we are done he gives me the printed verdict: If everyone on earth lived the way I do, we'd need 4.5 times the resources the earth has to offer to accommodate us all. My questioner assures me I did well; the average American uses his or her share of the resources of six earths every year.

For the second year, Jefferson's Carbon Footprint Fair did its part to send its message: we all need to live a more sustainable lifestyle if our planet is to survive. The rest of last month's fair offered re-

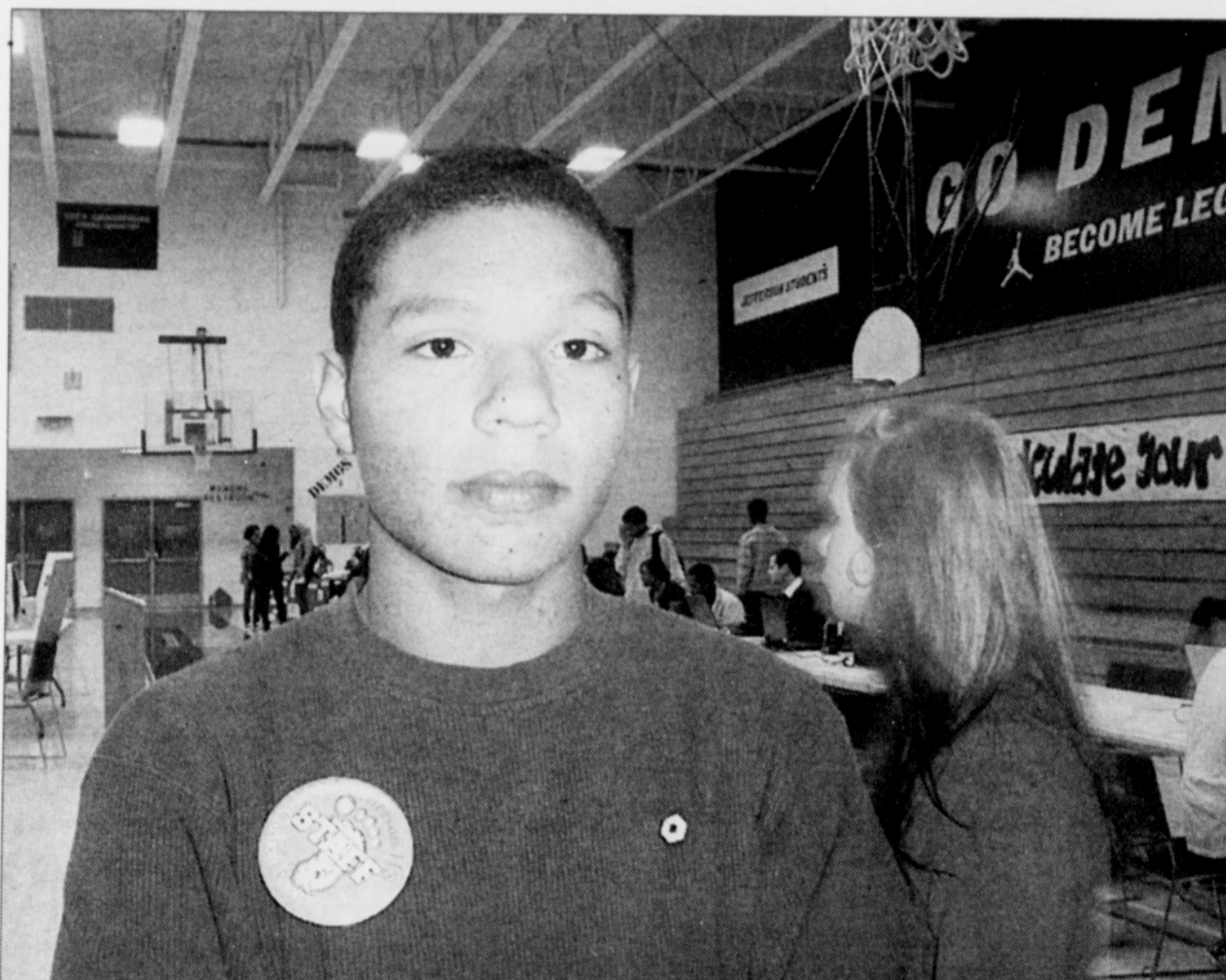


PHOTO BY LEE PERLMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Jefferson High School Sophomore Josh Stark helped coordinate the north Portland school's Carbon Footprint Fair.

sources to help those who came achieve these ends. Some were supplied by public agencies such as Metro or non-profits like the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, but most were put together by student volun-

teers, like the fair itself.

The event drew about 600 visitors. Among the visitors were students from Ockley Green and Trillium schools, and the Self-Enhancement and Harriett

Tubman academies.

"We wanted to bring in students because they are our future experts and leaders," faculty advisor Laura Belinsky told the Portland Observer. It was with this audience in mind that the fair had a table devoted to Green Jobs – what they are, what salaries they pay, what requirements they have.

The fair was put together by the Jefferson Sustainability Group, students and faculty who meet during lunch and after school to promote environmentally-friendly practices. They recruited 40 students to help run the fair, and group member Josh Stark, a sophomore, says it wasn't hard to do.

"People are starting to get the message," Stark told the Portland Observer. "There's a green or sustainable way to do everything on earth; you just have to find it."

The survey reminded people that "there's always room for improvement," he said.

Stark personally hopes to have a Green job someday; he will be seeking to attend Boston University with a major in mechanical and a minor in electrical engineering, he said.

Jefferson has made itself more sustainable; they recently received a \$15,000 grant from the Earth Day Network to install photovoltaic solar panels on the school, one of ten institutions to receive such a grant out of 80 applicants.

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