

March 7, 2010 To: Alan Hawkins, Jeff Shedd, Steve Connolly, Tom Eismeir, Peter Esposito, Mike McGovern, Bob McMalley, Janet Hoskins, the School Board and the Town Council

In February, the Cape Elizabeth High School Environmental Club with teacher-advisor Sue Garrett won the ECO-Excellence Award for green activities within the town of Cape Elizabeth. In recognition of their work, the group has been invited to the EcoMaine site on Tuesday, March 16th from 10:00 to 1:30 for an award presentation, a tour of the facilities, and a luncheon where the students will be able to meet others who have added to the greening of their towns and to share ideas.

One of the High School Environmental Club goals is to increase the awareness of activities students could do every day that would have a positive effect on the environment. The group came up with an idea to increase the schools recycling and decrease the waste put into the hopper by composting high school kitchen waste. A trial program was started in October where the students provided the kitchen staff with barrels labeled 'compost' and information about what could be hot composted.

Hot Compost is the act of combining 30 to 1 ratio of carbon and nitrogen sources. The beauty of hot composting is that you can combine, meat, dairy, grains, veggies and compostable paper to help meet the correct ratio. Once the ratio is met, the material naturally heats up and decomposition happens within the hot composting barrels.

This small group of students took responsibility to pick up the pre- and some post-consumed kitchen waste daily and put it in the student made 'hot compost' barrels. This effort was duplicated in the Pond Cove and Middle School Cafeteria by the kitchen staff. The pre-consumed kitchen food was sorted into different bags that allowed the salad bar and vegetable food waste to be fed to composting worms in homemade worm farms.

In addition, the Environmental Club students were able to motivate other high school students to sort their plastic wear, milk cartons and put their paper and food waste into the correctly labeled trash bins to decrease the amount of waste thrown in the trash and hauled away.

This work has also been helping the Town as well. Cape Elizabeth receives biweekly data from EcoMaine, documenting the weight of recycled items and the weight of thrown away material. Food waste from both kitchens had been going directly to the Transfer Station and adding to the weight of refuse being hauled away prior to the students taking action.

The Environmental Club also offered monthly composting workshops on Saturday mornings through the Community Service Program to educate the community on different composting techniques and help with purchasing as in a bulk order, or build homemade products to meet individuals composting needs. Worm farms are also rented out, so that people can try out the farm prior to owning it to see if the size is right for them.

The Club has many ideas in action, they have been working with Mr. Hawkins, the school administration, teachers, farmers, gardeners and community members on a plan to build a greenhouse and gardening program for the Cape School District, where they would use the worm tea and the composted product to enhance their growing medium and grow foods for the schools and community.

Thank you for your support of the Students Environmental and Educational Experience.
Kate Williams-Hewitt