

Greening your World

Connecting Faith and Environmental Awareness

PAGE 9

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ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

School takes on global warming by learning and doing

ST. JOHN — St. John the Evangelist is hot about global warming. That was the name of a yearlong energy education program at the school, as well as an attitude adopted throughout the building to live more eco-friendly.

Barbara Cerwinske, an enrichment teacher at SJE, has coordinated the effort, with the intended outcome of becoming environmentally literate and energy-conscious. The school-wide program has been designed to increase students' awareness of the energy they use; how that usage is affecting the environment; promote ways to decrease energy usage at home, in school, and in the community; and the economic choices students must make as they pursue a more ecologically sustainable society.

Activities this year at SJE began with an assembly on global warming. Through a \$10,000 BP A+ for

Energy Grant, the school also purchased Laptop Lunch Kits for grades 1-5. Everything in the kit is reusable, thus cutting down on trash.

The project also included a field trip to Earthworks, an environmental learning center in Plymouth. Some classes also received energy kits that contained fluorescent bulbs, night lights, shower heads, and a refrigerator thermometer.

In late February the school hosted an energy carnival. Originally designed to strengthen math and science skills, the carnival featured a series of stations where students and parents tested their energy knowledge in exchange for "energy bucks" redeemable for prizes.

The carnival featured activities such as "Energy Bingo" and "Energy Family Feud." As Cerwinske explained,



St. John the Evangelist School families test their knowledge on the environment and power sources at an "energy carnival" in the school gym, Feb. 24. (Tim Hunt photo)

"The whole family worked together as a team at five different games."

The middle school at SJE performed a musical about energy. Other classes are singing about the ecology. Much of the learning in this interdisciplinary unit has been literature-based, the teacher said.

The aim of these and other activities, Cerwinske said, is to "teach kids to conserve energy. Use less packaged materials; less throwaway. Let them realize that they're going to hurt their generation if things aren't done now."

Cerwinske hopes to secure another BP grant

for 2009-10 and focus on solar energy and wind energy.

The teacher said the school-wide effort has been making an impact. Students are more conscious about not wasting things, Cerwinske said. Also, teachers are reusing paper or using the backside.

The school is using email more and using less paper.

Candace Scheidt, principal at SJE, said Cerwinske's efforts "have impacted other teachers here. It's been a real spark for the faculty."

Scheidt has learned from parents that their children have brought energy lessons home. Recalling the energy carnival, Scheidt said, "It's so exciting because parents are making changes in their homes because of what their kids are learning in school."

At school, the principal said, the staff is trying to reduce the amount of paper products, e.g., cups, plates that would normally end up in a landfill. The school is using more biodegradable items and is also recycling eyeglasses by donating them to the local Lions Club.

"We're just trying to live more lightly on this earth," Scheidt said.

By Steve Ewino