

# Going Green Is Rewarding

Kelley School fifth graders Jillian Blodgett, Ian MacTaggart and Evie Childs are hoping a water and soda bottle and can recycling initiative they've begun at Kelley School will not only help the environment, but help fund any number of good causes.

In fact, the first fruits of their environmentally friendly venture \_ \$11 they received from the redemption counter at Wegmans after their first, two-week bottle and can collection in classrooms \_ will be given to the Wayne County Chapter of the American Red Cross to benefit earthquake victims in Haiti.



Since their planning work began in the fall, the threesome adjusted their water bottle collection initiative to become a profitable one for good reason.

Here's why.

They learned of the passage in April 2009 and implementation in November 2009 of New York's Bigger Better Bottle Law. It updated the state's 1982 Returnable Beverage Container Law that required a minimum 5 cent deposit on beer, soda, sparkling water and wine coolers sold in New York up to a gallon in size. The new law was expanded to include deposits on water bottles under a gallon in size.

Plain, flavored, and nutritionally-enhanced waters can be included, except if they contain sugar.

The intent of the new law was to dramatically increase the recycling rate for the 3.2 billion bottles of water that are sold each year in New York, which represent nearly a quarter of all beverage sales.

Talking it over with their teacher Karen Burgess, Blodgett, who wanted to start some kind of green program at her school; MacTaggart,



who became the project's spokesman; and Childs, who assists in any way she's needed, decided to become profitable and use the money earned to help fund initiatives they think are worth supporting.

But that's not the only adjustment the Kelley School Recycling Program planners have made.

After their first collection, they've decided to add redeemable soda cans and other non-redeemptive beverage containers, like for Nesquik, to their program, because not all students and school staff just drink bottled water and the other containers ended up in the classroom collection bins. They recognized all need to be recycled.

In developing their program the students initially brainstormed with Burgess who suggested the water bottle collection program and they sought permission to begin from Principal Chris Mizro.

Needing collection bins, MacTaggart contacted the Western Finger Lakes Solid Waste Management Authority and Neil Walters, WFLA recycling coordinator, who provided 51 waste basket-sized containers for the Kelley program.

They met with Kelley head custodian Tom Noble, who provided two large trash cans and bags for each of the two floors in the school where the bottles and cans can be dumped after being collected in classrooms.

The first two-week collection program concluded afterschool February 25 with Blodgett, MacTaggart and Childs collecting the bins from every classroom; dumping them in the big trash cans and then sorting the cans and bottles.

"There were a ton of them," Blodgett said.

That was good news.

But to their consternation, some of them had to be rinsed out like some Nesquik containers that MacTaggart termed "deesgusting."

"They are all supposed to be clean and rinsed out \_ not yukky," he said.

But Blodgett, MacTaggart and Childs are optimistic that in time, as they continue to get the word out, like on KSK News at the school, the kinks in the program will be worked out.

They hope:

- Each classroom will police its own recyclables making sure they are clean with caps off, rinsed and taken to the trash cans in the hallways so they won't have to.
- More staff and students will participate.

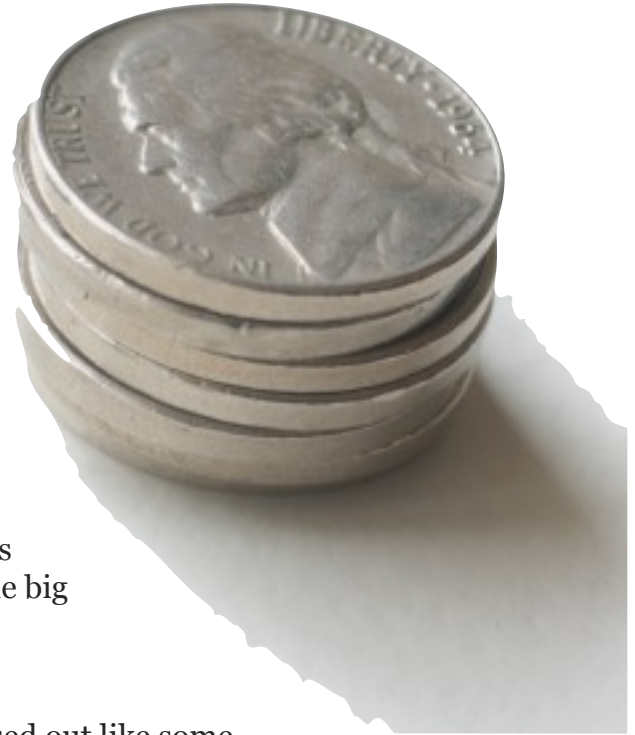
After the initial collection, Childs took the non redeemable bottles home for recycling and Mrs. Burgess' husband Tom took big bags of redeemable cans and bottles collected to Wegmans for the children.

Even though the program keeps them busy, Blodgett, MacTaggart and Childs think it is well worth their efforts.

"It's worth it if it will help the environment and the money will go to good causes," MacTaggart said.

Right now they are eyeing helping earthquake victims in Chile; the Newark Food Closet; school activities and more with money earned in the future.

"I think we are quite lucky this project went from being a good project to a good project that makes money," Burgess said.



Kelley Principal Chris Mizro thinks the new student-devised and driven program is great.

“They planned and organized the program. They’ve used their public speaking and problem solving skills in the process of developing it and are making modifications as needed,” Mizro said. “This program is a great addition to the paper and cardboard collection program Crystal Hansen’s students have been involved in for several years.”

Marjorie Torelli, WFLA public relations/education coordinator, said the “for profit” Kelley School Recycling Program is unique among school recycling programs in the area.

“Good for them,” she said. “This is a great project. And they are making money and using it for good causes. That’s fabulous.”