

# Thornell Road Service Stars

## History

### Objectives and Impact

The Thornell Road Community Service Group uses the Greenhouse area at the school for their Environmental projects. Currently they operate a papermaking lab, worm farm, grow herb plants and have a recycling center. The main objective of this area is to provide resources for the students in the school to be able to learn about saving the environment using a hands-on approach. We share our skills with other schools in the district along with groups in the Community.

### Deepening Students' Understanding of Recycling

When Service Stars asked the student population, "How do we recycle," the answer was "we throw it in the blue box". When they asked, "What happens after that?", the answer was "I don't know". Our Service Stars took this information to heart and have made it their mission to answer all these questions for the students. Our philosophy is: "If you don't re-use it, it is not recycling."

### Recycling Paper – A hands on Example

The Service Stars run a paper lab to answer the question for the students of "what is recycled paper, how do we re-use it?" Most students had no idea what recycled paper was and how it could possibly be made from the garbage in the classroom.

A local office supply store granted the Service Stars their request of new recycling bins for each classroom. Every year the Service Stars go into each classroom and give a presentation to the class on what can be placed in the bins. Presently Thornell Road School collects paper, plastic bottles, juice pouches, aluminum cans and plastic bottle caps to be recycled. We use some of the paper for our paper lab and the rest goes along with the bottles and cans to a recycling center.



The Service Stars researched the papermaking process, designed a lab and taught fellow students how to make handmade paper. Every class has the opportunity to make handmade paper in art class and then invite their parents and siblings to visit the lab at Open House so they can pass on the skills learned to the whole family. Teachers and staff have the opportunity to have a tour at any time during the year as well as to place orders for handmade paper for use in the classroom.

## From Worms in Dirt and Beyond



Our Worm Farm adds to our recycling by demonstrating that everything, including vegetable scraps can be recycled. Studies show that around 50% of household and 30% of school waste consists of organic waste – i.e. food scraps and garden waste which could be composted. Organic waste that is sent to the landfill generates methane, a greenhouse gas that's 20 times more greenhouse-intensive than carbon dioxide. By composting food waste (or using a composting worm farm), the average household could reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 40%. The Service Stars want to teach this composting habit to the students who will then encourage their parents to follow suit at home. The Service Stars use our Worm Farm located in the Greenhouse to learn how organic material is decomposed. They collect matter that would otherwise go into the landfill including vegetable matter from the school lunchroom and add it to the worm farm on a weekly basis. We use the by-product of the worm farm as fertilizer for our Herb Garden.

## Recycling Center

The Greenhouse houses the collection bins for our recycling center. At the present time TR recycles paper, cardboard, milk cartons and juice boxes, plastic water bottles, plastic caps, juice pouches, glue sticks and bottles. The custodians collect the items in our recycling pails in every classroom and the lunchroom. The Service Stars sort the juice pouches, caps and glue sticks to send them to Terracycle and Re-cap companies who make them into new products.



## Gardening Center

The Service Stars use the Greenhouse to start their herb garden from seeds. We currently grow Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme (to the music of Simon and Garfunkel) as well as Dill, Basil, Tomatoes and Peppers. They use the by product from their worm farm as organic fertilizer. They learn how the plant grow, how to maintain them and how to harvest the herbs. Students share many of their seedlings with the "Rochester Roots" program in downtown Rochester.

## Ongoing Goals

In conclusion Service Star Students have a goal to introduce the Thornell Road students, staff and community to the ideas of recycling from start to finish. If students could learn at an early age not to send things directly to the landfill including paper, plastic and food products, we could save our natural resources. Just like the slogan from the America Recycles campaign... "It's not recycling unless you re-use it".

The greatest reward of these projects is when the students take the information home. In the papermaking lab at Open House we heard how excited the parents were to finally "see" this paper that their children had been talking about. The students bring their siblings and parents in and they could explain the whole process from start to finish. It is amazing to see the interest, the hands-on approach, and the personal satisfaction all the students have gained from the process.



## Service Stars Recognition:

**2007-2008:** Thornell Road Schools Recycling and Papermaking 101 was highlighted in the Districts Service Learning Initiative. Other district schools are encouraged to follow their example.

**May 2007:** Two students from Thornell Road School were selected as winners in the New York State Senate's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual IMA Green Nation Celebration Competition. They were invited to Albany for the Awards Ceremony.

**Spring 2008:** Thornell Road School was recognized by the Department of Environmental Conservation because they had 100% participation in the America Recycles Event.

**May 2008:** Three students from Thornell Road School were selected as winners in the New York State Senate's 17<sup>th</sup> Annual IMA Green Nation Celebration Competition. The students were invited to Albany for the Awards Ceremony.



**April 12, 2009:** Thornell Road Service Stars and their paper recycling project make the front page of the Democrat and Chronicle in their "Going "Green" at School" article.

## **Project used as a model for others**

Thornell Road Service Stars' projects are already being used by other schools in the District as a model. We are leading our District in the recycling efforts. We are happy to share our ideas, resources and know how to help others bring the same program to their students. We encourage students to bring their families and other community members into our school to share the skills and knowledge they have learned. It continues to be our hope that our impact on the environment will extend beyond our school as we share successful practices that help foster other people's knowledge and attitudes about recycling.