

Stratford Gazette

Putting Community First

Students push for waste-free lunches

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Taking out the trash wasn't just a job for the custodian last week at Anne Hathaway Public School.

Grade 2-3 students spent time after each lunch hour collecting and sorting bags of garbage and separating the recyclables and organics from the rest of the waste.

And they didn't even raise a stink about it.

For their efforts, the school will be eligible to win a \$1,000.

Anne Hathaway participated in the Waste-Free Lunch Challenge, an educational program offered by the Recycling Council of Ontario, Metro Ontario and Tetra Pak Canada, that aims to support educators, students and parents to reduce waste generated from school lunches.

"It's important for the kids to take care of the Earth; they are in charge of their future," says teacher Tarra Green, whose students organized the school's participation in the challenge.

Students were encouraged to commit to bringing a waste-free lunch every day. Posters were put up in the halls and reminders were announced over the school's speakers.

Students were asked to bring their food and drinks in re-usable containers, and to use real forks and knives, not the plastic ones that tend to get thrown out after one use.

Green's students were in charge of monitoring and recording the amount of waste produced each lunch hour.

Green says the results in just five days were promising. A pre-week audit showed the school generated about 15.42 kilograms of garbage; by the end of the challenge the school had dropped the amount to 8.27 kilograms.

Students also discovered that about half of all the lunch waste consisted of juice boxes, which as of now are not recyclable with the collection company used by the school. Green says she is looking into the possibility of collecting juice boxes in a separate container and placing it across the street to be collected by the city's recycling company.

Also, about one-third of the waste consisted of scraps that are compostable.

The final waste tally and some helpful tips for parents who find themselves rushed in the morning to put together a waste-free lunch for their kids will be posted in an upcoming school newsletter.

According to Green, if Anne Hathaway is among the 20 schools to win the \$1,000, the money will go towards further green initiatives. She would like to see the school purchase a compost bin and increase its eco-friendly educational programming. Some of the money could also come in handy as the school, which is starting its own Earth Club, hopes to plant additional trees around the playground. The school has applied for grant money for the project as well.

At the end of the day, Green says she wants students to feel like they are making a difference and bettering their school in a way that lasts long after they have moved on.



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