

**Walkersville Students and Teachers
Recognized as Watershed Stewards
-By Ronnie Voigt**

Beginning in Fall 2005, Walkersville high and elementary schools began collaborating to promote environmental awareness on the school campus and watershed, connections between high school students and fourth graders, and energy awareness for students. Since that point, the schools have had numerous lessons together, planted over 140 native trees, replanted the tree grow-out area, and identified campus environmental problems. The joint project has received community support, a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and recognition as a Watershed Steward by the Monocacy & Catoclin Watershed Alliance.

Walkersville High School Advanced Placement Biology, Biology and Advanced Placement Environmental classes along with several Student Service Learners are working in conjunction with the Walkersville Elementary School 4th graders. There are two components to this project. This first involves indoor and outdoor classroom experiences designed to teach the importance of living in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Maps of the Watershed, the Bay Report Card, the booklet by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service “Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping – Chesapeake Bay Watershed” and other resources from books, magazines, the Internet and the coursework from the Grounds for Teaching Institute are used.

The second component is the action piece where both groups work together to improve the schoolyard habitat, including outdoor grounds and indoor recycling and energy use. This includes planning, observing, planting, maintaining, and monitoring data. Students’ journals document both components of this project and continue throughout the years of the project.

Both schools are also working towards becoming Maryland Green Schools. This includes improving the environment outside as well as incorporating energy saving and environmentally friendly ideas inside. All the students in the elementary school working to become a Green School know that the planting as well as the other projects will help the Chesapeake Bay. At the high school level, the environmental club and other science students are learning the same things, integrating it with other subjects as well.

During the winter months, birdhouses and feeders are built for the native landscape. Teachers write grants for future phases and prepare for spring work. In order to continue the restoration of the adjacent campuses, the spring 2007 action project for students will be done in two parts: a large meadow area at the entrance to campus and a small no mow plant area by the often flooding grass area in front between the elementary parking lot, driveway and school. These projects are designed to improve water quality by increasing water absorption and decreasing runoff, as well as improving wildlife habitat. Many of the plants selected will provide food for wildlife. The students will plant native shrubs

and flowers and are learning the importance using plants that are native to the area and help meet the needs of butterflies, birds and other wildlife.

Maintenance of the projects will be by the continued collaboration of the fourth grade and biology classes, as well as the environmental club and environmental science students with the support of the grounds and facilities staff. Future phases of the project will continue through 2009. In the next few years, more planting, a nature fitness trail and outdoor classroom will be added. For all activities, both high school and elementary school students will reflect in journals to document study and activities.

Participants in the project include:

High School: 6 teachers and 125 students – Grades 10-12 – Biology, AP Biology, Environmental Science, Environmental Club, Student Service Learners – Teachers: Barry Burch, Sue Faibisch, Amber McCauley – lead teachers

Elementary School: 3 teachers and 120 students – Grade 4 – 4 science classes and collaboration with the art teacher, Mrs. O'Donnell. Lead teachers Kim Day and Ronnie Voigt

***Note:** Six teachers in the project went to the **Grounds for Teaching Institute** over the past two summers with Karen Kelly Mullin (**Barry Burch, Ronnie Voigt, Kim Day, Sue Faibisch, Amber McCauley and Susan Klima**)

We are also working with April Wells and Community Commons in planning.

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