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## News & Opinion Weekly

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### **CELF's 2008 Expo inspires, teaches and helps set a tone for the future**



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*by Peter Moses*



Westchester County Executive Andy Spano neatly summed up his view about the importance of the recent Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation, or CELF, EXPO, proclaiming; "Getting kids motivated about the environment ripples far beyond them. It means they will discuss it with their friends, and also with their parents, and that's how you get real and sustainable change, when you have children teaching adults."

Spano opened the closing ceremony of the 2008 EXPO, held at the Goldstein Gym at Pace University in Pleasantville this past week. The closing capped off an exciting and educational day, where 1,160 students and 120 teachers participated in the information sessions and toured through booths, speaking with sponsors and exhibitors. Total attendance for the day, including the public, reached an EXPO record of 1,560 for the one-day event.

In addition to the inside exhibits, outside EXPO visitors toured the Westchester County Veggie Van, which runs on used vegetable oil rather than gasoline, and a test model Chevrolet Hydrogen Fuel Cell SUV, which emits nothing but water, plus enjoyed a Birds of Prey demonstration by Pace's James Eyring. Whole Foods Market provided beautiful reusable shopping bags for students and teachers to collect exhibitors' materials and bring home their keepsake EXPO journals and EXPO Quests, educational scavenger hunts that aided their exploration of the exhibits.

CELf's much admired Learning with Leaders program panelists, which held seminars throughout the region during this school year, made several presentations throughout the EXPO to students visiting from over 25 schools on field trips or showcasing their own exhibits.

"I gained more knowledge in one and a half hours this morning than I have all year with regard to sustainability," said Joe Tripodi, assistant principal of John Jay High School, who runs the Katonah-Lewisboro school district's sustainability program. "Between the educators and non-educator sources, the EXPO is simply incredible and I hope more people come every year. They (CELf) do a great job."

### ***Organic produce grown locally a big hit***

One of the more popular booths was the Scarsdale Middle School's Organic Garden Club. Many students who stopped at the booth were given organically raised plants. Students manning the booth explained how to grow vegetables organically and why that matters so much to the planet.

"This is such a good experience for our students," said Duncan Wilson, Scarsdale Middle School's assistant principal. "We had a bunch of kids excited to teach other kids what they learned by growing things organically. The kids felt that they knew something, they liked something and they wanted to share that knowledge with others."

Some of the produce the students grow is actually used in the school cafeteria and pumpkins grown last fall were turned into pumpkin pies.

Students explained the advantages of purchasing and eating locally grown produce. They pointed out that the closer the food is grown to the consumer, the less distance it travels by fossil-fueled vehicles and therefore the less polluted the environment.

"It's fresh, it's local and it's something I am going to push with my parents," said David, a visiting student from Rye Country Day School. "Sustainability means more than just recycling."

Erika Harvey, of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, which has been spearheading raising local awareness of the need to buy foods grown nearby, said she was quite impressed by the informed questions of the students. "This is the second year we've been to the EXPO. This year the students really wanted to know more about what we do and didn't just read questions they were given by their teachers. They seemed to really want to participate in sustainability on a local level."

### ***Aveda, a manufacturer making a difference***

Another highly popular exhibit for the students was the Aveda booth. Students got to smell and sample many of the products created by this forward-thinking manufacturer, which uses natural processes to create its products.

“I liked a lot of the exhibits,” said Brett, of Wampus Elementary School in Armonk. “But I especially liked the Aveda booth. I love the smell of lavender and I learned that scent can calm you down.”

The Gaia Institute with the aid of a county recycling truck collected Styrofoam, to be recycled and turned into their patented ultra light “soil” which is used for rooftop gardens, productively reusing this waste otherwise destined for landfills. Dr. Paul Mankiewicz, Ph.D., a biologist and plant scientist and founder of the institute showed samples of the retooled Styrofoam and spoke about how wide-ranging this new application can be.

“There are 26 square miles of rooftops in New York City,” said Dr. Mankiewicz. “Just think of the possibilities.” The Styrofoam drop-off was a success, according to Dr. Mankiewicz, and soon the many cups and containers collected will have a new environmentally friendly use.

### ***A diversity of exhibitions for students to explore***

The EXPO featured over 50 exhibits from industries, government agencies, non-profit agencies, individual students and school programs. In addition to the above, exhibition topics included green building (US Green Building Council, Mercury Solar, PowerSmiths, Heliotronics), sustainable design (Steelcase), socially responsible investing (Smith Barney), corporate social responsibility (Global Horizons), biodiversity and conservation (Rainforest Alliance, DEP), education (CELF, Jacob Burns Film Center, Grassroots Environmental Education). The EXPO program introduces students to the concept of sustainable development and how it can be integrated into their everyday lives. The goal is also to inspire them to understand that employees and leaders in every field, and not just scientists, need to be involved in sustainability.

Chappaqua participation included students from Seven Bridges Middle School and Horace Greeley High School, as well as an article in the EXPO Journal from Robert E. Bell Middle School science teacher Annie Madden, with assistance from her Team 8H students.

“This was a very successful EXPO and I was particularly impressed how involved the students were,” said CELF founder Katie Ginsberg. “The goal is to engage, and every year the level of engagement keeps growing.”

The Children’s Environmental Literacy Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that collaborates with public school districts, schools and individual teachers to raise awareness of sustainable development and to help incorporate related principles into K-12 curricula and programs. For additional EXPO information and a complete listing of CELF initiatives, including CELF’s Professional Development Programs and Summer Institute for Sustainability Education, visit <http://www.celfoundation.org>” title=” <http://www.celfoundation.org>”>  
<http://www.celfoundation.org>.

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