

LCMR students focus on saving water with DEP, EPA

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Students in Jeff Martin's Lower Cape May Regional High School science class have been flushed with success in a water project that could have gone down the drain.

With the help of a federal and a state agency, the high school will be able to save millions of gallons of water per year.

Zack Nickerson, a member of the American Littoral Society, said the project was called Water Champi-

ons, and was done in cooperation with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the school and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP.) He said funding involved an education program focusing on local water-supply issues.

The project included conducting water audits at homes, the school and several local businesses to determine how to be more efficient in water use, Nickerson said.

Student Greg Wilson said the township's main

problem was the potential of saltwater intrusion.

Student Ben Morris said an audit of water use at the high school found the "A" hallway and the main hallway restrooms take up much of the water usage. He said the main hallway restrooms have older fixtures and use the most water, he said.

Total high school water usage is 23,387 gallons per day, which equates to 116,937 gallons per school week or 4.2 million gallons per school year.

According to student

Madison Selene, if new toilets were installed in the girls restrooms in the main hall, water consumption would decrease from 1.6 gallons per flush (GPF) to 1.2 GPF, saving 1,445 gallons per day. For the boys room in the main hall, installing new urinals would reduce water consumption from 3 GPF to 0.5 GPF. Installing new fixtures in the main hallway restrooms would save 9,720 gallons per day.

Student Sophia Levalie said if toilets in the girl's restroom in the "A" hall-

way were replaced, water consumption would be reduced from 3.5 GPF to 1.28 GPF, saving 4,818 gallons per day. Replacing urinals and toilets in the "A" hallway boy's restroom would save 930 gallons of water per day. Total savings from per day for the "A" hallway would be 6,180 gallons per day, she said.

Total potential savings for the overall project would be 15,900 gallons per day, 79,500 gallons per week and nearly 3 million gallons of water per year, according to the students.

Nickerson said the school is planning to retrofit the main hallway restrooms.

He said EPA funding was available to upgrade some fixtures in the school. He recommended retrofitting the "A" hallway restrooms.

Superintendent Christopher Kobik said representatives from DEP and the EPA toured the school.

"This is an example of when agencies take their silos down and work together across sectors," he said.

Lower schools offer students free breakfast in class, lunch

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — During this school year, the food services staff of Lower Township Elementary Schools will have served more than 216,000 breakfasts and 152,000 lunches, according to Kurt Himstedt, supervisor of food services.

During a Board of Education meeting May 24, he said he had some big shoes to fill following the retirement of his predecessor, Robert Morris, who served the district for 18 years. Himstedt said 73 percent of students eat breakfast at school in the district, with 52 percent participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

Among special activities conducted by the food service department was transforming the Mitnick School cafeteria into an Italian restaurant for Restaurant Reward Day.

"Students were treated to a full service, five star restaurant atmosphere complete with Italian music and a fireplace," Himstedt said. "The staff in our cafeteria donned white shirts, bow ties and chef hats to complete the setting."

Students ate salad, pizza, cookies and juice.

"They were even asking for doggie bags to take home leftovers," he said.

The department offers "Try It Tuesday," which is scheduled once a month in each school. Himstedt said samples of new menu items were given to students with no purchase necessary. Among samples served were chicken quesadillas, buffalo chicken cheese steaks, meatloaf, chicken ranch wraps and butternut squash, which was not very popular, he said.

Students vote on the samples with a tally at the end of day, Himstedt said.

"The students then take

ownership pretty much of the menu," he said.

Himstedt said the school district's Wellness Committee consists of administrators, faculty, Board of Education members, nurses and parents with a goal of promoting healthy lifestyles through exercise, health awareness, nutrition and education.

"Each month food services sends home fliers called 'Nutrition Nuggets' which contain activities for children and parents to do together such as cooking, sports activities and more nutrition education," he said.

Himstedt said a wellness month for students would be promoted to help students become more aware of the actions they take throughout the day that affect their wellness. Four weekly health-based activities will focus on hydration, exercise, nutrition and sleep, he said.

Research shows when

students eat breakfast they score higher on standardized tests, make fewer trips to the nurse and are less disruptive in class, Himstedt said. The school district serves a free breakfast to every student, every day if they wish to partake, he said.

Breakfast in the classroom has been a collaboration of support from food service staff, teachers, custodians and the administration, Himstedt said. He said the program would be changed for the next school year.

"The cafeteria staff will start delivering unutilized bag breakfasts," Himstedt said. "USDA requires students take a certain amount of components or items to count as a reimbursable breakfast meal. All those items will be enclosed in that bag."

Students will also have the option of selecting milk, cheese sticks and other fruit options, but as long

as they take the breakfast bag, the school will be reimbursed, he said.

Students will no longer be able to check off their name on a roster for their free breakfast. USDA requires teachers or a designee to check off names

on the roster, according to Himstedt.

"Students may return unopened, prepackaged items to the breakfast tray, so we're not wasting or throwing away items that students do not need or want," he said.

Lower hoping to expand

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received.

"A lot of our staff is excited. I know our board is excited that we get this grant and see our children grow and meet their needs as they go through Lower Township (schools)," he said. "We also recognize one of the day cares in our township is closing. This would help those families in need of the midday preschool day care."

He said the school district would not know if it will receive the grant until mid-July.

Business Administrator John Hansen said the district applied to the state to modify its long-range facilities plan, undertook some site work and analysis for documentation. He said the board approved an increase in day care rates. Rates for day care had not been raised since 2011, Hansen said, adding that the rates will increase about 15 percent.

"These rates are essentially lower than rates that are already charged by other day care providers or other districts," Hansen said.

He said some day care operations raise rates every year.

Preschool rates from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. are \$23 per week; 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at \$63 weekly; from 7 a.m. to

1 p.m. and day care from noon to 5:45 p.m. is \$74. The rate from noon to 3:30 p.m. is \$63 and from 3:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m., the rate is \$23 per week.

The kindergarten rate from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. is \$23 per week with the 3:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. weekly rate at \$46. For first and second graders, the day care rate from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. is \$23 weekly. The rate for 2:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. is \$46 per week.

For third and fourth graders, the rate for 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. is \$23 weekly and for 2:15 p.m. to 5:45 p.m., the weekly rate is \$46. For grades 5 and 6, the rate for daycare for 7 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. is \$23 and from 2:15 p.m. to 5:45 p.m., the rate is \$46 weekly.

In other business, the board approved continuing an agreement with a number of other school districts in the county not to bill other districts for homeless students in attendance. An agreement was renewed to continue to provide meals to West Cape May Elementary School.

The board approved school district security officers to carry firearms

while on duty patrolling school grounds.

Samaniego thanked Matt Szczur, an outfielder with the San Diego Padres and graduate of Lower Township schools, for a \$5,000 donation to the district's education foundation food program.

"The Matt Szczur Foundation donated a check for \$5,000 to help feed our fam-

ilies in need," Samaniego said. "That money will go directly into that account. Next year when we do our two food drives, that's paying for half of what we fundraise for and will serve about 450 students."

The night he made the donation, Szczur hit a home run against the San Francisco Giants, Samaniego said.

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