



The High School View

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Speaker tells why air sucks

By Caitlyn Clark and Kira Shipway

Learning how to save the world one kilowatt at a time became the theme of an important green class held at the high school last week.

Rob Meyers, energy salesman and analyzer for South Mountain, visited the school as a guest speaker to help students understand the importance of green heating in the home and how to recognize air leakage.

"In the winter time, air pathways from inside the home to the outside bring warm, moist air into contact with cold surfaces," said Mr. Meyers, "causing condensation. This not only wastes energy, but can be a durability or health issue."

Energy technicians use special tools to help them identify air leakage in a house. "The IR (infrared) camera is used to locate voids in insulation," Mr. Meyers said. "The camera does not see through walls, but rather reads surface temperature and assigns a color based on temperature. Warm surfaces are bright, and cool surfaces are dark."

Mr. Meyers went on to explain that to find air leakage pathways he uses a blower door, a large fan, that puts the building under a negative pressure creating suction



PHOTO BY TOVA KATZMAN

During Mr. Meyers' presentation students were intrigued by the IR camera, a device used to identify air leakage on an LCD screen.

towards cracks in the room.

To make the topic more applicable to students, Mr. Meyers offered simple solutions to the audience on how to make bedrooms more heat efficient. "Make sure your windows are locked and sealed well, or use a seasonal shrink wrap to cover the windows. You can also switch your light bulbs to CFL (compact fluorescent) or LED (light emitting diode). Or just add another blanket and turn down the thermostat."

While the idea of energy efficiency wasn't new to the majority of students who attended, Mr. Meyers' in depth presentation provided

new insight. "We have been discussing alternative forms of energy like nuclear and solar," said senior Tessa Permar. "But it was surprising to learn that fiberglass allows air to travel through it, and is not the insulator we think it is. Before the lecture I had only ever read about thermal imaging cameras and I never thought I would get to actually use one. Also, I live in a rented

house so energy-saving renovations aren't really an option so I'm interested in learning about the minimal changes I can make to help insulate the house without doing any kind of construction."

Other students also felt that the presentation had value. "Getting all the information first-hand made the lecture unique. It is not something you can just go get out of a textbook," said junior Hudson Klebs. "In physics we talk about forms of energy and energy conservation and Mr. Meyers spoke relevantly to all of the energy related work we do in class."

High school races against racism

By Lily Bick

Some students experienced cultural shocks at the local level at this year's race culture retreat. About 50 regional high school students were chosen to meet with their peers at the Hebrew Center in Vineyard Haven on December 15 and 16, where they discussed their racial backgrounds and the prejudices and discriminations that sometimes accompany them. Nominations to participate, based on student leadership skills and backgrounds, came from high school teachers.

Those who have participated in the past were asked to return as student advisors. They led discussions, provided insight, and shared stories about their lives. Said senior and student advisor Mike Kendall, "I had some responsibility and was put in charge of running anonymous activities."

The group read and discussed the poems such as, "I, Too, Sing America," by Langston Hughes, and "Boy Who's Afraid," by Shauntay Watkins. Large discussion groups were first intimidating to some of the new attendees who were too shy to speak in the set-

ting, but once they were separated into smaller groups of six people called home-groups, everyone opened up and shared personal stories and beliefs. The home-groups provided a safe, secluded place where the students could talk about different topics without the fear of being judged.

Students were not alone in their participation during the retreat. Teachers also shared stories of their experiences with prejudices in the past. "Now you guys have all this dirt on me," said high school ELL and STAR coordinator Matt Malowski to his home-group after sharing an anecdote of his experiences of prejudice, "but I'm not worried."

Several teachers and guidance counselors assist with the program including guidance director Mike McCarthy and adjustment counselor Amy Lilavois.

Many students who participated in the retreat left with a feeling of satisfaction. Said senior Shaelah Huntington, "I learned to see the viewpoints of other people. Prejudices exist even here and I will take the initiative to lessen the prejudices of this school from now on."

New mentors inspire young women

By Liam McCarthy and Tessa Permar

Conquering fear can be fun. At least that is what a group of girls at the Oak Bluffs School is discovering every Monday after school when they meet with student volunteers from the regional high school. The girls, in grades 4 - 8, gather to try new activities and to conquer their fears. They have gone horseback riding, played tennis, had spa treatments, and have designed their dream rooms.

They have traveled outside to Felix Neck, Cedar Tree Neck, and Waskosims's Rock to experience different aspects of nature.

None of this would have been possible if it were not for the work of Mary Vivian, organizer of the group and nurse at the Oak Bluffs School. Stipends from the Oak Bluffs School and from donations from Island businesses allow her to provide valuable experiences for the girls.

"We get to express ourselves here. This group is something to do after school and is always

fun," said Tabitha Oliver, a sixth grader. To help create a supportive atmosphere, Ms. Vivian insists that sarcasm and harsh words are not allowed. "The girls get enough of that elsewhere," she said. She wants girls who come to the group to feel safe and comfortable.

She also encourages the students to try new things. The girls must keep an open mind, and open mouths, as they try new food such as brussels sprouts.

Agreeing to follow these rules enables them to do things they never thought possible. Ms. Vivian recalls one such experience when she planned to take the group swimming. When the girls arrived, she was surprised to learn that most of them didn't know how to swim. With financial help from a grant, the girls took lessons for two months where they learned how to use life preservers, take care of another person in the open ocean, and overcome an acute fear of deep water.

The group also tries to help students make a smooth transi-

tion between junior high and high school. Last Monday high school senior Maggie Howard, who spends her Mondays mentoring the girls, danced alongside the girls in a ballet class taught by junior Heather White. Maggie said, "I've been enjoying it because I know that I'm making an impact on these girls' lives."

Another senior, Savannah Lawson, also spends time volunteering for the Monday group. "I really enjoyed mentoring for the girls' group because I've gone through so many of the experiences that they are going through now," she said. "It's rewarding to be able to relate to them and provide helpful insight."

The group was also formed to promote a healthy mind, body, and spirit. Ms. Vivian is adamant about not harping on the students about height and weight. "Kids are just bubbling out and bursting at the seams with things they want to say," she said. "If you have a friend to talk to, you are so much healthier."

Inductees honored



PHOTO BY RALPH STEWART

Senior Chelsea Counsell, National Honor Society (NHS) treasurer, lights a symbolic candle after making a speech on character at the 2009 induction. National Honor Society kindled flames of scholarship, leadership, character, and service in the 45 new inductees. Forty juniors and five seniors were brought into the Noepe (Island) Chapter of the NHS on December 14.

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