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## Cheltenham Township community celebrates Earth Day at school festival

By: Christopher Herb  
 04/30/2008

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**While it's common practice for schools to acknowledge Earth Day, it's rare to see them get the entire community involved for a festival. That's what Cedarbrook Middle School did April 26 when it hosted the annual Cheltenham Township Community Earth Day Celebration.**

The event was kicked off by a rain barrel workshop, where residents learned how to use rain barrels in their gardens, and many received free rain barrels. Arguably the event's main attractions were projects that Cedarbrook students had been working on since the beginning of the school year. The projects focused on issues related to the watershed that students selected after they studied the Tookany Creek to determine important issues they could address over the course of the school year.

On April 24, the students were surprised with a reward for their efforts. Representatives from Wawa, NBC 10, and Manko, Gold, Katcher and Fox, LLP, an environmental law firm, presented Cedarbrook with the grand prize of \$5,000 in the 2008 Environmental Community Service Awards. Cedarbrook was selected from school districts throughout the Delaware Valley to receive the award, which will continue the Tookany Creek project during the 2008-09 school year.

Tyler Mann, chose to do an "Adopt a River" project. Much like the popular "Adopt a Highway," Mann's project allows residents and groups to adopt a section of the watershed to clean up on an annual basis.

"I like to organize and set things up," said Mann, explaining why his project was a good fit. Marissa Townshend, a seventh-grader, chose to bring water protection into the home. She distributed Sun and Earth cleaning products to guests at the festival. The organic cleaning products, she said, protect the water from the chemicals found in many other household cleaners. Townshend said she contacted Sun and Earth, informed it of the festival, "and they were happy to donate samples."

Townshend added that her project had a certain ease of adoption. "It's important, because it's something everybody does," she said. The keynote speaker at the event was activist Christopher Swain, best known for swimming in some of America's most polluted waterways, including the Charles River, the Columbia River and Lake Champlain in 2004.

Since then, Swain has been touring the nation and asking students for help. During his speech, he explained that what he learned through swimming through polluted waterways was that pollution isn't always easy to see.

"You can see trash in every watershed in America, but that's not as bad as what you can't see," he said. Swain said the most dangerous pollutants are chemicals that come from things people use every day. "One of the places it's easiest to find this junk is in used electronics," he said.

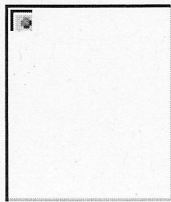
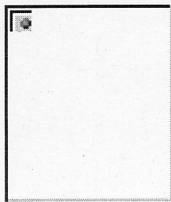
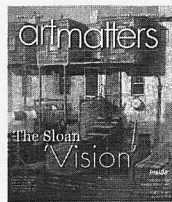
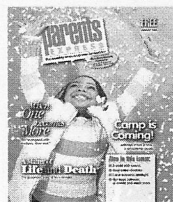
Swain explained that he hopes to collect 1 million pounds of used electronics and recycle them in the United States. Otherwise, he said, they would likely get dumped in developing countries, posing a risk to people's health.

While Swain spoke inside, a group of volunteers worked outside to help Swain's cause. They collected used electronics at \$1 per pound to be taken to a professional recycler.

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