

tip

PACK A WASTE-FREE LUNCH

Brown-bagging your child's lunch might be cheaper than buying lunch, but it can generate a lot of trash — plastic sandwich bags, plastic utensils, single-serving food containers and even the brown bag.

The Web site wastefreelunch.org says a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates 67 pounds of waste per school year.

HERE'S HOW TO PACK A WASTE-FREE LUNCH:

Use reusable containers for sandwiches and other main dishes, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and snacks.

Pack a cloth napkin instead of paper.

Pack stainless steel forks and spoons instead of plastic.

Use reusable drink containers instead of drink boxes, paper cartons or pouches.

Use a lunchbox instead of a brown bag.

Bonus: You'll save money by buying food in bulk rather than single-serving packages.

For more tips, go to www.wastefreelunch.org.

— Staff report

JAMESVILLE-DEWITT MIDDLE SCHOOLERS WADE INTO ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



MICHELLE GABEL / THE POST-STANDARD

Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School eighth-graders Sam Lim, 13, Kyle Rumble, 13, Bryce Nandal, 14, Alan Fang, 13, Katelyn Cremonese, 13, and Jesenia Haynes, 13, participate in a stream survey of Meadow Brook where it runs through St. Mary's Cemetery in DeWitt. Their analysis of the stream will be added to a database kept by Project Watershed, a program sponsored by the Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America.

water is by testing a watershed," Murphy says, referring to an area of land that separates two adjoining bodies of water. "All streams have to be monitored."

He asks the pupils, "Who's my first group?"

The answer is a unanimous, "Meee."

Project Watershed is an environmental education and community outreach program connecting Central New York middle schools, high schools, college students and adult volunteers to care for local waterways.

The 2½ year old program is a project of the Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, a nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1922. The league is named after the 17th century author of "The Compleat Angler," a famous fishing guide. The local chapter won the Defenders Chapter Achievement Award at the League's annual

THEY'RE MONITORING WATER QUALITY IN MEADOW BROOK AND ADDING TO PROJECT WATERSHED'S DATABASE

By Janel Martinez
Contributing writer

Thirteen eighth-graders from Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School stand in the grass surrounding Meadow Brook stream, in St. Mary's Cemetery in DeWitt, each sporting a pair of waders.

The middle schoolers are conducting a stream survey guided by Brandon Murphy, a graduate student at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

"You can find out how clean

school

"TIME IS BUT THE STREAM I GO A-FISHING IN. I DRINK AT IT, BUT WHILE I DRINK I SEE THE SANDY BOTTOM AND DETECT HOW SHALLOW IT IS. ITS THIN CURRENT SLIDES AWAY, BUT ETERNITY REMAINS."

— Henry David Thoreau



summer convention this year.

The league has provided science training to high schools in Cortland, Onondaga, Oswego, Oneida, and Madison counties for nearly 16 years. Now, its focus is bringing middle schools onboard.

Project Watershed added 18 middle schools to its roster this year. Middle schools such as J-D, Pine Grove in the East Syracuse-Minoa district and Danforth in the city school district are allowing students to apply in the world what they have learned in their science classes.

"The outdoor component helps engage them," Murphy says. "If (the students) lose interest in science in middle school, you've lost them and you're probably not going to get them back in high school."

Mat Webber, coordinator of Project Watershed, agrees.

"Research out there shows kids learn more with hands-on experience, especially outdoor hands-on experience," says Webber.

The J-D middle schoolers volunteered to participate in the stream survey. It begins with observing the stream's creatures a determining factor of stream cleanliness. One method requires students to kick up sediment from the bottom of the stream into a net.

"Now we get to do the dance," says 12-year-old Abbey Yonta. "We're having fun," she says, laughing.

They find aquatic creatures such as riffle beetles and aquatic worms, and a variety of premature flies including stonefly, mayfly and damselfly. Students measure water depth, pH balance (whether it is acidic, basic or neutral) and percentage of oxygen saturation.

According to the students' results, the water in Meadow Brook is "good." It scored

"excellent" on chemical tests and "good to excellent" on the pH balance. In accordance with the League's Save Our Streams water monitoring procedures, the J-D students submitted their results into the program's water quality database, accessible to the students, their teachers and government agencies such as the state Department of Environmental Conservation and Onondaga County.

In the past, Project Watershed's results brought notice to environmental issues. A survey of Beartrap Creek watershed, a 3-mile-long branch of Ley Creek and Onondaga Lake that flows alongside of Interstate 81 in Mattydale, showed high levels of contamination. Cicero-North Syracuse High School students helped detect the pollution, which tests showed was caused by an aircraft de-icing agent from Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Their findings led to a fine and a large-scale cleanup of the creek.

The J-D eighth-grade science teachers, Catherine Flynn and Steve Jacobsen, and students have fun while tackling the science curriculum.

"It was fun doing something out of school that was science related," says 13-year-old Trevan Signorelli. He says he would come back again if he gets the chance.

"I like how we can actually interact with it (the stream) instead of just learning about it," says Yonta of J-D.

Flynn says this was a great activity for the students because in a few weeks they will be covering the in class topics discussed at the stream.

"They'll bring their experience and enthusiasm and bring it back to the classroom," says Flynn.

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Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School eighth-graders Jesenia Haynes, 13, Chidera Joseph, 13, Abbey Yonta, 12, and Katelyn Cremonese, 13, use a net to collect wildlife from the bottom of Meadow Brook, where it runs through St. Mary's Cemetery in DeWitt. Their analysis of the stream will be added to a database kept by Project Watershed, a program sponsored by the Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America.