

#7

Environmental Initiatives: They're Happening Here!

Though school has been out for nearly half an hour, about a dozen Edward Little High School students are still traveling through the hallways. Not roaming, mind you. These students are here on a mission: volunteering their time to go classroom to classroom, collecting paper, cardboard, and other various objects to be recycled that would otherwise be thrown away.

Originally established by physics teacher Peter Worthington and a few of his students, the Edward Little High School Recycling Club has grown ever since and now includes nearly twenty-five members. The club meets weekly to make "recycle runs" and twice a month travels to the Auburn Recycling Plant where they recycle about a ton of paper a month. This program's average yearly savings is about 10 tons – or 20,000 pounds, which puts a dent – if only small – into the area's landfill problems.

This club has also inspired other area schools to follow in its footsteps. Meeting with both Park Avenue and Fairview Elementary Schools, Mr. Worthington and other club representatives have shared their experiences with recycling and encouraged others to follow suit.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this program – and one reason I believe it's the most happening thing in the Lewiston/Auburn area – is because this program is mainly student-run. It's really the idea of growing environmental consciousness among citizens, especially teenagers, that I find remarkable. The twin cities, notorious for their low recycling rates (Lewiston has a rate of 27% while Auburn's is a mere 23%), need this kind of environmental initiative. The ELHS Recycling Club simply embodies Lewiston/Auburn's current interest with the environment and reflects the fact that people are ready to do something about it.

Other projects in the area encourage this view. At the ShareCenter in Auburn, teachers can get materials at little or no cost that have been donated by local area businesses. This has two positive results: not only do teachers have more access to materials but this also reduces waste, aiding Lewiston/Auburn's current landfill issues. Another example is the recent beautifying and creation of parks, such as the two parks located on either side of the Lewiston/Auburn Bridge. Even more evidence: the creation of the Auburn Recycling Committee, which focuses on how to better the recycling rates in the area.

In Lewiston, the work of the Landscape and Treework Department has made significant progress in enhancing the beauty of the city in recent years, planting between 110 and 130 new trees annually.

All this evidence points to one conclusion: the twin cities are aware of the waste problem, and are ready to take action. This fact I find motivating; I am proud to live in a community that is moving in an environmentally-conscious direction. The whole concept of recycling is based upon the idea that if everyone, whether they have a large or small impact on the environment, does their part to reduce, reuse, and recycle, our environment will be preserved. Thus, in a world with daily reports of environmental decay, it's comforting to know that the Lewiston/Auburn community is taking the initiative to do their part.