

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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11 years of recycling celebrated at Gateway!

Huntington – Last spring, Gateway’s “Be Green” Advisor Bonnie Roukey realized that the recycling club had been in existence at the high school for ten years. She envisioned a celebration that included inviting back the original student founder and Be Green members so they could see how much the program had grown.

It took a while to track down Kathleen Ryan (GRHS '07), who had envisioned recycling effort as a Gateway senior, and another few months to turn the idea into a reality.

Ryan, it seems, had taken her passion for the environment to the college level, earning a Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. She continued her education at American International College to obtain a Master’s Degree in Education.

Currently, Ryan is a science teacher at the Hampden Charter School of Science. When broached with the idea of a reunion/celebration for Be Green, she asked to bring some of her students to Gateway to learn more about school recycling and consider launching a program at their own school.

On Wednesday, April 25, a bus with 30 students and 3 staff members (Ryan included) from the Chicopee school arrived at Gateway. Members of “Be Green” were assembled and partnered up with the visiting students to take a recycling collection in the high school and at Littleville Elementary School.

“This was wonderful,” said Ryan. “We really appreciated it and looked forward to this cross collaboration with Gateway.”

The Be Green club treated their guests to a pizza lunch when the recycling was over.

Founding advisor Glenda Donovan was contacted to see about visiting, as well. Donovan was traveling and unable to attend, but sent a message to the students and alumni, “How wonderful to know that Be Green is still going strong at Gateway! Nothing pleases me more. Please send my congratulations to all who have continued the cause and a big “hello” to Kathleen and the other original members. I’m very proud of all of them!”

Also invited were the founding members of the group, who served in the 2006-07 school year. While most were working during the day and unable to attend, three other original recyclers visited Gateway: Annie Skerry, Jenna Swochak and Natalie Tacke took part in the event and were able to catch up with Ryan.

In its earliest days of 2007, Be Green members collected paper and cardboard and brought it home to their own town transfer stations. Eric Weiss, then the Hilltown Recycling Coordinator worked with CFO Stephanie Fisk and officials at Waste Management, to coordinate a recycling dumpster on school grounds. The cardboard boxes that Be Green had created for each classroom were in time replaced with blue bins and larger rolling bins were obtained to bring collected items to the dumpster.

In 2011, under advisor Lyn Avery, Gateway's Be Green group moved to single stream recycling, earning an "Environmental Eagles" award from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. In time, the smaller recycling dumpster was replaced with a much larger container, with a ramp to wheel the collection bins up to the top.

Club activities over the years have included assemblies and recycling poster campaigns to maintain awareness of the importance of the project.

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Photo: Gateway and Hampden Charter School students bring materials out to Gateway's recycling dumpster, during a celebration of over 10 years of Gateway's "Be Green" club.