

Storm-Damaged Lyncrest Outdoor Classroom Rebuilt

By Zak Koeske, 4.23.13 8:26 pm

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Lyncrest Elementary re-opened its environmental center Tuesday for the first time since Superstorm Sandy left the school's winding nature trail impassable and sent a tree crashing through the landing of its outdoor classroom.

Over the past few months, the school, the borough and the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission have joined forces to repair the center's damages so that Lyncrest students again can enjoy a hands-on opportunity to interact with nature and study the environment.

"This was a joint community effort," Lyncrest principal Maria Corso said at Tuesday's re-dedication. "The borough of Fair Lawn paid for the lumber, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission did the work and this is what you have today."

Corso said her vision for the environmental center, originally constructed by PVSC in 2008, extended beyond Lyncrest to the entire Fair Lawn School District.

"This is something we would like the district to enjoy," she said, calling the center an "untapped resource."

"This is an opportunity for interdisciplinary learning. Students can come out, they can learn about the environment, they can write, they can be inspired like Thoreau. That's really the thought that we have here."

Fourth grade teacher Deborah Kempin said the environmental center comes in handy not only for science classes, but also for lessons in many academic disciplines.

She said she often takes her students to the center in the early spring or fall to perform descriptive writing exercises.

Kempin's vision, like her principal's, is to open the space up to students from across the district.

"The big dream is to make this the hub in the district where we can actually get an environmental science teacher to come out here and teach all the kids," she said.

Other speakers at Tuesday's re-dedication included Mayor John Cosgrove, superintendent Bruce Watson, PVSC project manager Brian Davenport and the poised young mayor of Lyncrest School, Rio Matsumoto.

"The wildlife center and this deck are special to me," said Matsumoto, speaking from memory. "I can remember when I used to come out here to read and write with my class. We all got to sit and enjoy the environment and scenery, which is one of the great features of the outdoors. Since the weather is getting warmer, I'm hoping that we can come outside and learn in this enjoyable atmosphere again."

Following the ceremonies, Lyncrest students participated in the school's annual Earth Day Walk-a-Thon, which raises money for various environmental initiatives.

Photos

