

The 2015 winning rain barrel was designed and created by Mrs. Barth, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Martorana, and the fourth grade students in our class. Our journey began with an overview of the water cycle. The students learned about preserving our oceans, lakes and tributaries. We invited the Watershed Ambassador to visit our classroom; she presented important information about keeping our land and water free of pollutants. Our class enjoyed the demonstration presented by the



Watershed Ambassador. We then expanded on the information presented with classroom lessons and activities to reinforce the importance of protecting our water and land for ourselves, the plants and the animals.

Our next step was brainstorming a plan of how we were going to best represent the "From Land to the Barnegat Bay – The Natural Areas of Our Watershed" theme for the rain barrel. Students researched specific plants and animals in the Barnegat Watershed; posters were created about a specific animal, which included facts and information that were displayed in the Switlik hallway to teach others about the animals.

We were anxious to begin our creation, but finding a warm day to spray paint our rain barrel outside was difficult. We finally began penciling outlines of animals and plants on the barrel. We added specific details to help enhance the look of each plant and animal become more realistic looking. Everyone enjoyed watching our rain barrel change from pictures to telling an important message. As a class, we voted on the title of our rain barrel, "The Critters of the Barnegat Watershed have Something to Say!". The students brainstormed messages they thought the animals might say, and we applied them to the barrel. Thanks to paint pens and a lot of hard work, the rain barrel was finally complete when everyone signed their name on top. We then took a step back and admired our hard work and dedication towards the completion of the rain barrel. A photo was taken of the students with the rain barrel and picture magnets were created for them to remember all the time and effort they put into our rain barrel.

Our final activity to wrap up our rain barrel unit was creating nature homes in our school courtyard. Students collected natural materials from a nature walk around the outside of our school and created homes for the small animals in our environment. It was an awesome experience creating the rain barrel, learning about the Barnegat Watershed, and everything that can be done to protect it. We were overjoyed to hear that our rain barrel was chosen as the 2015 Rain Barrel Blitz Challenge.