

## Lodi students help clean the Passaic River

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What do a vintage sewing machine, shopping carts and tires have in common?

It may sound like a riddle, but these were all objects recently removed from the Passaic River in Lodi.

On April 12, the Eco5 Club from Columbus Elementary School spent an hour cleaning debris out of the river, in the section directly behind the Lodi Boys & Girls Club. The youth also cleaned litter from the grounds of the Boys & Girls Club.

The Passaic Valley Sewer Commission (PVSC) sponsored the project.

"We pulled out four shopping carts, four tires and a sewing machine. The kids know I love to sew. I told them it doesn't work and to throw it back," said Jennifer Costello. She quickly corrected that with a "just kidding!"

Costello is the club's leader as well as a teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) at Columbus School.

"It was an old sewing machine too, not an antique, but not a new one," explained Costello.

Two parents accompanied the students on the trip.

"We had two sets of waders for the parents and three pairs of workers' boots for children," said Costello.

PVSC provided both the waders and boots as well as life vests.

Students took turns going into the water to haul out debris.

"Everyone that went in the water had to have a life vest on," said Costello. "Nobody wanted to get out of the water. One of the fifth grader's fathers was there. I couldn't get him out."

The young workers helped haul out the foreign objects on a natural ramp out of the river. One group stayed on top and another on the bottom, and they worked together.

The group was equipped with shovels, but they mostly worked with their hands.

"None of these shopping carts were in for very long," said Costello, explaining that they were fairly easy to pull out.

Costello said that the kids had a great time.

"They loved it. You can have assemblies. You can tell kids. You can read articles. They don't get the impact until they get their hands in there. I think these kids will remember this forever," said Costello.

Costello said she wants to do this again but for a longer period next time.

"Next time, we'll do it for much longer, at least two hours. We were only there for one hour. We needed more time," she added.

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