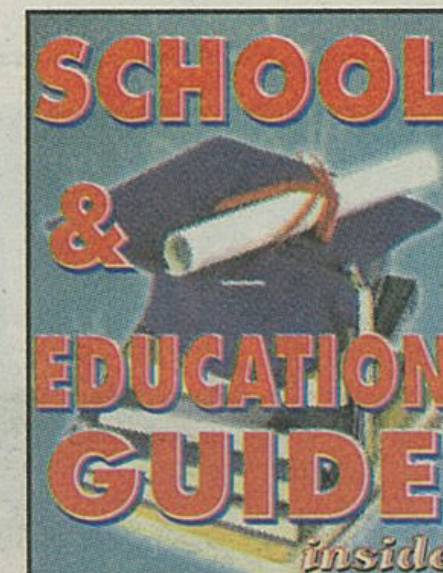


KEARNY

Harrison & East Newark Journal

Also Serving North Arlington

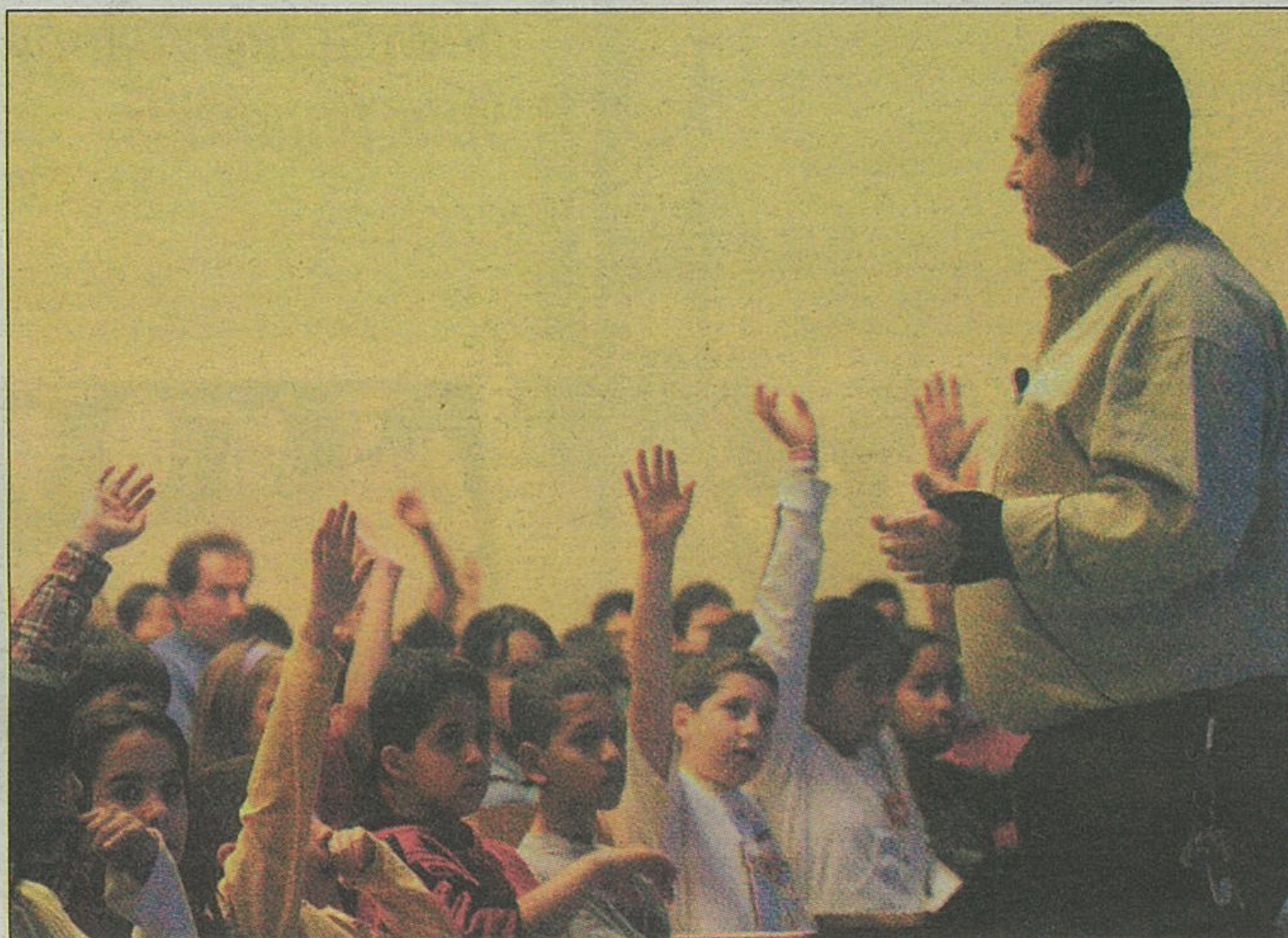


Entertainment guide, Page 12

www.nj.com/jjournal/

January 13, 2005

Volume 3 No. 44



Journal photo by Andrew Miller

CHRISTOPHER BROOKS, right, senior multimedia technician with the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission, asks Franklin School students in Kearny, questions about pollution in the Passaic River.

Talking trash

Students learn how they can help keep the area clean

By Patricia Churpakovich

Journal staff writer

Last week some Kearny students got "trashed," but in a positive way.

The students at Franklin School were visited by Passaic Valley Sewerage Authority commissioners, who gave fifth, sixth and seventh-graders a lesson on how trash affects the environment.

Chris Brooks, senior multimedia technician at the Newark-based water treatment

plant, said the goal of the program is to teach kids how to make their environment a better place and to teach them how a plastic bottle on the street could up in the ocean.

The program included many features, such as a homemade movie, short cartoon and PowerPoint presentation, demonstrating

See FRANKLIN — Page 6

Franklin School kids learn about pollution problems

Continued from Page 1

the impact trash has on local rivers and other bodies of water.

Other features were more interactive.

Outreach coordinator Matt Krone began his presentation by asking the children to pretend that it was 100 degrees outside.

"Who wants to go swimming?" he asked, to which the students responded with a rousing chorus of "yes."

As Krone began his slideshow of the areas' polluted waters, a picture of a refrigerator lying in the river appeared.

"No one wants to go swimming next to the refrigerator," he said.

Both Krone and Brooks showed the students various ways Passaic Valley tries to improve the quality of local waters. A 52-foot long, 20-foot wide skimmer boat is used to collect floatable garbage along the surface of rivers. The boat goes out about 10 months a year.

But keeping the environment clean is a community effort.

Kearny councilwoman Carol Jean Doyle, who attended the program, has been helping with the annual spring cleanup of the Passaic River for the past 12 years.

Educating children in schools about the environment had been Brooks's idea, Doyle explained.

"He mentioned going to the schools to me six years ago and I totally agreed," she said.

Krone also talked about the impact pollution has on local wildlife.



Journal photo by Andrew Miller

FRANKLIN SCHOOL STUDENTS raise their hands during a lecture by the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission at the school's auditorium in Kearny.

Fish could ingest the garbage deposited in the river and would ultimately die from it, he explained.

Pollution has even scared off some bird species altogether, said Krone, giving the example of the great blue heron and the snowy egret which hadn't been seen in the area for some time.

But Krone said things are looking up, because the birds have been coming back—an indication that the water is getting a little cleaner.

"We want people to go out there and have a good time doing recreational things (on the river)," Krone said.

erson.

The number one piece of garbage found on the beach is cigarette butts, Brooks added, while the number one piece of garbage found in garbage dumps is construction debris.

Brooks also gave a brief explanation on where water goes after toilets are flushed.

"Where it goes is where I work," he said. "We clean waste water kind of like we clean a dirty swimming pool."

The students also eagerly answered questions, not only to get the answer right, but for a free T-shirt.

"It (the program) was good because it teaches people not to pollute," said Daniel Jones, 10, after giving the right answer to a question on biodegradation.

And it wasn't just the students who were excited about the program.

Bridget Davis, a sixth grade earth science teacher, said even the teachers learned something new.

Davis, who was responsible for bringing Brooks and his group to the school, said her students responded well to the program.

"They said it was great," she

said. "They really enjoyed it. They like that they can see the Passaic and that they can see it as they walk to Burger King. It made it almost personal."

Davis and her students were so impressed by the program that they are planning to help with the areas' spring clean up.

"I think I'm going to hook up with Councilwoman Doyle and see if I can get a bunch of kids from our school to help her with the clean up in May," she said. "A lot of my girls in my homeroom were saying, 'How do I sign up for that (program) in May?'"

Brooks and his colleagues have reached out to more than 13,000 kids so far this year through the education program.

He ended the program with a colorfully drawn poster showing ways kids can help the environment, from adopting a park and recycling to picking up after dogs and planting a tree.

For more information about cleanup and getting involved with the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners, contact Robert DeVita at (973) 466-2714 or e-mail bdevita@pvsc.com. To request an educational presentation, contact Anthony Russo at (973) 817-5975 or e-mail arusso@pvsc.com.

Following the slideshow, Brooks showed a movie about a character called Messy Marvin, who likes to dump his trash into the river. In the movie, Bob DeVita, the river restoration program manager, shows Marvin what trash does to the river and how the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners spend a lot of time removing the trash from it.

Brooks and Krone supplemented their presentations with facts about the river and trash that the students found interesting.

Krone said the Passaic Valley cleanup crews once found 500 tires in the Passaic River in Pat-