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PVSC 2010 Educational Outreach Program Staff unveils new internet chat technology

Passaic, NJ – As part of its program to educate area students about how they can help improve our environment, Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners' (PVSC) Chairman Tony Luna announced today that the PVSC Educational Outreach Program Passaic County kicked-off at the Mario Drago School #3 while unveiling new internet chat technology.

Hundreds of students filled the Mario Drago School #3 multi-purpose room this morning to learn about steps they can take to help protect their local waterways. United States Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr., joined the students for the program. The multimedia interactive presentation is part of the PVSC Educational Outreach Program, which maintains a full-time outreach staff visiting schools within the PVSC service area whose goal is to relay the importance of protecting our environment. PVSC staff also unveiled new technology which allowed the children in the school to communicate live via the internet to the Captain of PVSC's skimmer vessel as it patrolled the Passaic River. Students had the opportunity to ask the Captain questions and learn how the vessel skims debris from the river. PVSC staff plans to expand this technology in the schools that schedule presentations through the remainder of the school year.

"The PVSC is honored to not only come and talk to the students in Passaic about ways they can help us keep our waterways clean, but also to listen to the innovative ideas they can teach us," explained PVSC Executive Director Wayne J. Forrest. "It is critical to teach our children the significance of engaging in the stewardship of our environment for future generations to come," Forrest said.

To supplement the work done in the classroom, the PVSC Educational Outreach Program also provides opportunities for students to organize their own stream bank cleanups, which enables the students to apply what they learned in the classroom to their own communities. Building on this service learning model, the PVSC follows-up their educational presentation by organizing a stream bank cleanup with the students to reinforce what was learned in the classroom.

"Engaging children in hands-on service projects helps reinforce the important lessons they learn in the classroom," said PVSC Chairman Tony Luna. "The PVSC has developed a program that complements the classroom curriculum while presenting it in a way that is engaging to the students, and we are thrilled to now include live internet chat so the students can interact with our staff working in the field. I am glad that this program is using leading edge technology to teach students the importance of keeping our environment clean."

The PVSC Educational Outreach Program maintains a full schedule every school year. Each program is age-specific and is available for grades K-12. The program has also expanded into the summer season, allowing staff to include camps.

"Passaic City is pleased to continue to partner with the PVSC on both their river restoration efforts and their educational outreach programming," said Passaic City Mayor Alex Blanco. "I applaud the students and staff of the Mario Drago School #3 for helping make Passaic City a cleaner and healthier community," Mayor Blanco added.

In order to protect and preserve local streams and rivers from water pollution, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners operate one of the country's largest treatment plants for the wastewaters of northern New Jersey. With many expansions, and recent upgrading to secondary treatment, the facility has been striving, since its initial operation in 1924, to improve local water quality in accordance with federal and state water quality legislation. Since its inception in 1998, PVSC's River Restoration Program has removed over 8,000 tons of debris from the Passaic River and Newark Bay and sponsored over 650 individual clean ups, along with educating over 150,000 students on how they can help protect the Passaic River and our environment.

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