

Lauralton Hall Environmental Club Promotes Organic Use¹

On April 28 the Lauralton Hall (Milford) student body gathered in the auditorium and seated themselves along a “runway” to watch 45 of their fellow classmates put on Lauralton’s first-ever fashion show. This was a fashion show with a “twist” since the models were not wearing new clothes! All of the fashion entries were old clothes that had been redesigned. Most were tee shirts that students refashioned in some unique way. Some students just had fun with the idea of redecorating and created either clever or funny tee shirts; others created tee shirts that were so fashionable they could be sold in boutiques anywhere.



Members of the Environmental Club display recycled tees at fashion show to promote awareness of the wise use of resources.

The idea of a fashion show from recycled tee shirts was created when the environmental club was awarded a mini-grant by Student Activists for Service-Learning (SASL), whose mission is “to promote service-learning as a teaching method in New Haven County secondary schools.” The fashion show featured tee shirts for a reason - most are made from cotton. The club wanted to raise awareness about the environmental impact of conventionally grown cotton. Despite its reputation as a natural fiber, conventionally grown cotton is treated with more chemicals- including known carcinogens- than nearly any other crop. Amazingly, it takes about one-third of a pound of pesticides and fertilizers to grow enough cotton for just one T-shirt.

The environmental club officers worked tirelessly promoting the idea of a fashion show for their classmates and putting the show together. Club Sponsor Donna DiMassa encouraged and supported club members in their efforts. In addition to the fashion show to promote the use of organic fabric and the recycling of fabric, the club also worked to develop awareness of the use of organic food products with a focus on coffee. The students created and disseminated a survey to record coffee drinking habits and hosted an organic coffee time for faculty of the school.

Reflection after the events was universally positive with the students recognizing the organizing power and fun they brought to their mission of building awareness for the positive use of organic products. Ms. DiMassa noted, “As a teacher, I love to have complete control of my classroom. ...I had to learn to let go and to let the students run the show. The bottom line was that this was a student endeavor, if they did not design tee shirts and get models, then the fashion show was going to be canceled. No teachers or administrators participated or spoke before, during or after the fashion show. It was all about the students.”

Evaluations of **YES** projects, often note how students recognize their ability to cooperate, plan and implement meaningful work. Lauralton Hall students celebrated putting their ethics in action to build environmental awareness at their school.

¹ From Lauralton Hall website: <http://www.lauraltonhall.org/news/473>