

SUFFOLK STUDENTS RECYCLE NEARLY 312,000 PLASTIC BAGS

It takes 12 million barrels of oil to produce the amount of plastic bags the United States uses per year. Suffolk students have been proactive and done their part to divert nearly 312,000 of these bags from our landfills, treetops, ditches and waterways.

The Suffolk Clean Community Commission, City of Suffolk and Suffolk Public Schools collaborated with Trex Company, Inc., the leading manufacturer of alternative decking, railing and fencing, for a plastic bag recycling drive. The drive started on America Recycles Day 2010 (November 15) and ended on Earth Day 2011 (April 22).

Students recycled nearly 312,000 plastic trash bags. "Suffolk Public Schools is committed to recycling and saving energy, and the plastic bag project has provided a wonderful, hands-on lesson for students that I'm sure they'll remember the rest of their lives," said Bethanne Bradshaw, public information officer for Suffolk Public Schools. "It's been a very successful program. Way to go, kids! Thanks for helping Suffolk go green!"

Participating schools were placed in two groups – "Group One" included the elementary schools and "Group Two" included the middle, high, and alternative schools. Trex awarded a bench made of Trex materials to the school in each group that collected the most bags per capita, taking into account the student population in each building. Second and third place winners received a plaque.

The City received a third bench from Trex Company, Inc. this year. This bench was awarded to the overall winner in the drive, which was Turlington Woods. Group One's winners were: **First place**-Mt. Zion Elementary; **Second place**- Southwestern Elementary; **Third place**- Robertson Elementary.

Group Two's winners were: **First place**- John F. Kennedy Middle; **Second place**- Nansemond River High; **Third place**- Lakeland High.

Participating schools included Florence Bowser, Elephant's Fork, Mt. Zion, Robertson, Southwestern, Kilby Shores, Nansemond Parkway, Northern Shores, Oakland, and Booker T. Washington Elementary Schools; John F. Kennedy Middle; Turlington Woods School; Nansemond River, Lakeland, and Kings Fork High Schools.

"I am so appreciative of the energy, enthusiasm, and tireless efforts put forth by the staff and students at the 15 schools participating in this year's plastic bag recycling drive," said Hattie Lester, litter control coordinator for the City of Suffolk, who spearheaded the drive. "The plastic bags collected during the drive will make a huge difference in the preservation of our Earth."

Each year, Trex utilizes more than 1 billion recycled grocery bags to create its environmentally-friendly outdoor living products. By working with Trex, local schools and students learn the importance of recycling, help keep plastic bags out of landfills and are rewarded for their efforts.

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Cutline for photos:

Photo named Mt. Zion- Diana Bales takes the first seat on the bench her school, Mt. Zion Elementary, won for collecting the most plastic bags per capita in the Elementary School category. She coordinated the drive at Mt. Zion.

Photo named JFK Middle- Pictured are members of the Environmental Club at John F. Kennedy Middle. JFK Assistant Principal Roosevelt Brown II (far right), club members and the sponsor, Kenton Whalen (second from right) coordinated the plastic bag recycling drive at John F. Kennedy and counted the bags this year. The Club also recycles paper, plastic bottles and aluminum cans. (Left to right) JFK Principal Vivian Covington, Ashley Cartwright, Shakyra Cotton, Cheyenne Schmack, Naya Ashley, Lawren Patterson; (seated) Lauren Bailey.