

Berkeley middle school "Goes Green"

BY BONNIE DELANEY • TOMS RIVER BUREAU • FEBRUARY 17, 2010



BERKELEY — It sounded like something from a science fiction movie: a plasma gun so hot that it can vaporize garbage and break it down to its molecular level.

But the technology, called plasma gasification, is already applied in Canada, Japan and Taiwan, and there are plans for a plasma refuse plant to open 2011 in St. Lucie County, Fla.

"That's one thing I never heard of," said Claudia Vitale, 12, who was among the seventh- and eighth-graders at Central Regional Middle School who participated in an interactive program aimed at getting them to take steps to "go green."

Robert McCourtney, a Manchester resident whose wife, Liora McCourtney, is a mathematics teacher at the school, spoke to the students Wednesday during the school's Green Week.

Get to Know Green, Robert McCourtney's company, is a clean-energy consulting firm which is focused on education of the global population. This is accomplished with the deployment of green lesson plans and the creation of workshops for teachers, said McCourtney, who is also director of cable and Internet operations for V.S. Hovnanian Group.

McCourtney said that plasma gasification plants and new nuclear power plants are interim solutions to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

"You're not going to see our country get off fossil fuel in 10 years. It's going to take 20 years or more," he said, adding that wind turbines, tidal turbines and solar energy are ways to produce power for "the energy-hungry United States."

He also encouraged the students to take small steps to conserve energy by using fewer paper and electronic products; using high efficiency light bulbs; buying Energy Star-rated products; simply turning lights off; recycling; and controlling water consumption.

When he asked students how many televisions they had in their homes the answers ranged from two to 13.

Claudia Vitale, for example, said there are six televisions and five people living in her home.

Samantha Farreau, 13, said that there are 10 and sometimes more people in her parents' home and 13 televisions.

"But at my grandma's there are two televisions and three people," Samantha said.

Liora McCourtney said this is the second year the middle school has held a Green Week.

"Each day we do different lessons and activities. For example, today students in the lunch periods will compete to see who can recycle the most items, and my math classes will draw bar graphs with the results," she said.

Some teachers will also have their classes write essays about conservation and recycling and create posters.

ON THE WEB: For more information visit Educate Green: www.educategreen.com and Central Regional School District: www.centralreg.k12.nj.us