

## MARBLEHEAD REPORTER

# Winning the water bottle battle at Marblehead middle school

*Sustainable Marblehead funds a hydration station*



**Chris Stevens**

Wicked Local

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Over 1,600. That was the number of bottles on Feb. 15 that did not go into the waste stream, thanks to the newly installed hydration station at the Marblehead Veterans Middle School.

Just think of what that number might be today.

MVMS students Sadie Beane, Sidney Reno, William Pelliciotti, Jack Morgan and Jacob Sherry, along with members of Sustainable Marblehead and school officials, gathered in the cafeteria on the day after Valentine's Day to celebrate a rather unique partnership that formed as the result of a school assignment.

“Recently, in a civics class, these students had to write and deliver what is called a soapbox speech,” said MVMS Vice Principal Julia Ferreria. “And they all chose the topic of recycling and cutting back on single-use plastic.”

Ferreria said she heard Sustainable Marblehead was exploring the idea of putting hydration stations, essentially a water fountain designed for refilling water bottles, in the parks so she reached out to them.

Sustainable Marblehead member Lynn Bryant said Ferreria's outreach happened to coincide with a discussion the conservation working group was having about the need to reduce plastic. Bryant said they had been talking to Recreation & Parks about getting the stations into parks and decided it was equally important to put them in the schools as well.

To that end, Sustainable Marblehead funded a hydration station for the school. A small readout at the top of the machine ticks off the number of plastic bottles saved as a result of using the hydration station.

“I couldn’t think of a better place to be really supportive of our efforts to reduce plastic than the schools,” Bryant said.

Bryant said she also thought it was important that as adults they support what is clearly a passion the students have for reducing plastic.

## **All about reduction**

Eighth-grader Sadie Beane said when it comes to plastic, reducing usage over recycling is the way to go. Plastic breaks down into microplastic, which will destroy the environment and put their future in jeopardy, Beane said.

“Cardboard, paper, metal, could all be used for things instead of plastic,” she added.

William Pelliciotti said when plastic gets into the ocean, it also gets into fish and if they can’t digest it, they will starve. If they don’t starve then people that eat the fish will also ingest the microplastic, which is just as unhealthy for them as it is for the fish.

“You could solve the problem if you put in the effort and recycle or use alternatives like metal water bottles,” added Jack Morgan.

“This is the next generation – they’re eighth-graders and already so passionate and we’re so proud of them,” Ferreria said, adding that the student's soapbox speeches were heartfelt.

“You could just see all the passion they had for doing better for the environment and doing better for future generations to come.”

## **Recognition**

The students weren’t the only ones recognized for their efforts.

“I also want to highlight Kate Reynolds,” Ferreria said. “She is our science teacher and started the composting program here and is our Green Team advisor, that’s our sustainability club, so we’re really proud of Kate’s work and her leadership.”

And Bryant was also recognized for the years of work she has put in as a founding member of Sustainable Marblehead. The former executive director said it was an honor to be recognized and thanked Sustainable Marblehead for making the hydration station a reality before turning back to the students.

“I just want to say thank you to the five of you,” she said. “It is so wonderful to see you here and all of your work and passion and commitment it just makes me, feel grateful and hopeful.”