

Going Green

Students Rehabilitate the Garden

One of the many perks of being at East Side is students are surrounded by professionals who are passionate in their craft. Each and every employee, from our security guards to our principal is just waiting to meet and greet students with a warm smile. These staff members also work to think out of the box to get students involved in things they are passionate about. The establishment of East Side's very own garden proves this.

East Side has always taken steps to enhance the awareness of going green, and being eco friendly. The Environmental Committee has worked hard setting up recycling bins in the school's hallways and classrooms. Science class lessons, like eleventh grade biology teacher Erica Ring's lab were students petition to save a specific species, incorporate real life situations in their curriculum that allows scholars to understand the events occurring in their world that impact their environment.

Erica took her passion just a bit farther this summer when she established the East Side Garden staff. This staff was a group of East side students who cared about their environment and were interested in helping to create a green space for school. Erica explained that she and 7th grade science teacher Danielle Sadaphal had been working on the garden with the environmental committee for a long time, but never seemed to make any true progress. She stated, "Every time we would do a cleanup, the garbage and vandalism seemed to build up even faster! As much as we loved the garden, it didn't look like anyone cared about it. It became clear that we needed a long term project that would include as many improvements as possible at once..." That project eventually became the East Side Garden project. With support from the principal, Mark Federman, and assistant principal, Tom Mullen, Erica began to look for ways to fund the project. Erica worked hard to secure funding through several grants.

Erica admitted fear that she couldn't find committed students to work with her over the summer to put in the time and hard work to fix the garden. "I knew that kids talked about wanting the garden to look better, but I didn't know if they would follow through." Her fears were quenched when "...almost seventeen kids showed up rain or shine."

For four weeks the Garden Staff worked to beautify the garden. Tasks included weeding, planting, choosing which seeds to plant and where, watering plants, putting together garden beds, ducking bees, and ducking hornets and putting up with a very hot August sun. Abby Morenigbade, 12th grade said, "A highlight was going to the farmer's market in Union Square to select flowers for the garden." The Garden Staff definitely had a lot on their plate and gobble it up they did.

Students participated for a variety of reasons: some interned at the garden and got paid for their work, some earned gym credit, and some simply volunteered their time. Each individual worked just as hard as their peers in helping to "revamp" the garden, as Erica said. Zipporah Genyard, 12th grade, appreciated the experience because it gave her the chance "to get to know people

from different grades which was great."

The result was several garden beds with plants varying from flowers appealing to the eye to fresh grown tomatoes and squash. Abby Morenigbade, 12th grade, explained her pride in the response to the garden. "Random strangers passing by would come in and compliment our work!" The Summer Garden Team did an amazing job at restoring East Side's garden and hopefully the program will continue so that students will participate in helping the school stay on an Eco-friendly track and see their hard work payoff in the the finest way nature has to offer.