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Recycling coordinator takes waste-cutting message to classroom

Friday, January 23, 2009

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BY JENNIFER H. CUNNINGHAM

Herald News



CLIFTON — The city's garbage has to be taken 300 miles for disposal, in a Pittsburgh landfill.



ELIZABETH LARA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Al Du Bois told the students: "We need to really change the way we live and be environmental stewards."

That's the kind of out-of-sight, out-of-mind fact that makes an imprint on students when you're selling them on the benefits of recycling and other environment-friendly actions.

Al Du Bois, the city's recycling coordinator, was throwing that tidbit and others at dozens of Clifton High School students Thursday in Marietta Steransak's environmental science class.

"We need to really change the way we live and be environmental stewards," Du Bois told the juniors

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and seniors. "We need to look at our everyday activities."

Municipalities are required to recycle under state law. It's also good for the city's bottom line. Selling recyclable items such as glass jars and metal cans reaped more than \$500,000 for Clifton in 2008.



ELIZABETH LARA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Clifton High School student Sara Justo, 18, left, asks a question during a visit by city recycling coordinator Al Du Bois.

But recycling cannot solve all of the city's environmental problems, Du Bois said. He said residents have to do their part by cutting back on creating garbage by reusing containers and clothes, for example.

"Each one of you can reduce the amount of waste you [generate] every day," he said.

Du Bois, who graduated from Clifton High School, said the city disposes of its non-recyclable garbage by taking it to a waste transfer station and then shipping it to Pittsburgh, where it is added to a landfill.

"I can't believe what they are doing with the trash," said Joshua Gaviria, 16. "They're using up the natural resources we have by shipping it."

Steransak said the 3,400-student high school was not recycling its plastic bottles. Du Bois told her that the city would retrieve the bottles and recycle them if they were set aside for pickup.

Du Bois' talk stirred many of the students, who, with the help of Steransak, are considering starting a "Car-Ban Day" for this coming Earth Day, April 22, when they would eschew personal vehicles in favor of walking and using public transport.

"It was enlightening," Sara Justo, 18, said of Du Bois' talk. "A lot of the things he said, I would have never known."

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH LARA FOR NORTHJERSEY.COM



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