

## 'Go Green' campaign a success with students

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By **DAVID BERGENGREN**  
dbergengren@repub.com

AGAWAM - Each of Agawam Middle School's more than 700 students now has a personal stake in seeing that used paper winds up in a recycling bin rather than a trash can.

The school kicked off a "Go Green" campaign on Nov. 20 as part of the state's Mass Recycles Paper! effort, and is keeping the momentum up with a series of programs and contests designed to get the students involved and keep the community informed about recycling options.

"This year, just the spirit of recycling is remarkable" at the school, said the city's environmental project coordinator, Tracy M. DeMaio. She said she thought the involvement of the school's fifth- and sixth-graders would continue well beyond the campaign. "I think it's a habit that they'll continue taking with them wherever they go," she said.

Guidance office secretary

Stacy L. Wieners, who started working at the school in August, said, "When I started working here, there was a lot that needed to be recycled."

Wieners went to DeMaio, the Parent Teachers Organization got involved, and the recycling program started coming together.

Students sign a "Green Team" pledge to "reduce trash, prevent pollution and conserve resources" through a list of measures they can take at home and at school. They participate in poster contests, answer "Go Green Trivia" questions, and decorate brown bags donated by Geissler's Supermarket on Suffield Street.

With the city's four elementary schools joining in, students will eventually decorate more than 2,000 paper bags with recycling-related themes. The bags will be returned to Geissler's for use by customers in hopes residents will "read the messages and support the students in town" in their recycling efforts, DeMaio said.

Fifth-graders Jonathan M. Latourelle, Paul S. Hotaling and Michael J. Young, who designed one of the posters being featured in the middle school's hallways, said the campaign is having an impact.

"When the whole program got going, it encouraged a whole lot more people to recycle," Hotaling said.

"It's just really good," Latourelle said, "because otherwise you could just pollute the Earth really, really bad."

Echoing that thought, Young said, "It's good to recycle because it keeps the Earth clean."

"I'm thrilled," Hotaling's mother, Parent Teachers Organization Secretary Karen L. Hotaling, said of the recycling initiatives. "Now it's become a big issue in the classrooms."

"Recycling has increased significantly," said DeMaio, who also credited the school's custodians. "The custodians really are supportive," she said. "They really have stepped up to the plate."