

Students want bottle bill

Friday, April 1, 2011

LAST UPDATED: FRIDAY APRIL 1, 2011, 10:29 AM

BY ALBINA SPORTELLI

CLIFTON JOURNAL

EDITOR

CLIFTON — About 2,000 plastic water bottles and 2,000 aluminum cans are sold each day at **Clifton** High School (CHS).



STAFF PHOTOS/PIERFRANCESCO BACCARO

About 1,000 CHS signed a petition to support a state bottle bill, but in the meantime, they are using a reversible vending machine to recycle bottles and cans. Pictured above are Noel Negrón and Natty Zapata and below are Ricardo Thomas Love and Shivaun Vogas, all seniors.

The school is hoping to minimize the bottles' damage to the environment by supporting a bottle bill or container deposit law in New Jersey, said the school's environmental science teacher, Marietta Steransak.

About 1,000 CHS students signed a petition in support of a bottle bill, or the Smart Container Act currently in the state's Legislature, said Steransak, also co-advisor to the school's Conservation Club with teacher Irene Dutch.

The petition and signatures have been forwarded to Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver (D-34), who is a supporter and a co-sponsor of the Smart Container Act sponsored by assemblywomen Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-37), Linda Greenstein (D-14), and Linda Stender (D-22).

"We have too many bottles and cans and some end up in the garbage," Steransak said. Lately, though, many bottles and cans are ending up in a reverse vending machine RVM, which the school has on lease for one year.



The RVM, currently in one of the school's three cafeterias, collects about 500 bottles or cans per day, Steransak said. The other bottles are ending up in recycling cans or, depending on the student, in the trash. Ideally, the school, with 3,500 students, should have three of the RVMs, one in each cafeteria, Steransak said.

Steransak said she and her students are not only concentrating on recycling, they are seriously looking at reducing the amount of waste. The next step in resource reduction, the teacher said, is to get refillable water bottles that students can use over and over and which won't end up in the waste stream. She said students could use the refillable bottles at the tap since "there is nothing wrong with tap water."

Steransack will try to prove that tap water is just as good as bottled water in a future project with her students. She said they will compare nine factors from tap water and bottled water to show there is no difference.

[Clifton's](#) Recycling Coordinator Al DuBois supports the school's efforts, and was instrumental in getting the RVM in the high school. He said a \$2,000 grant is being used to lease the machine for one year. He said another grant has been set aside for the purchase of the machine which will cost \$8,000, if the trial period goes well.

"The high school was looking to do a recycling project and I thought this RVM would be great," DuBois said.

The \$2,000 grant to lease the machine comes from an environmental education fund, DuBois said, and at the end of the lease year a decision will be made on what the next step will be. DuBois said the machines would work even better if the state had a bottle bill. He said he would like to see New Jersey adopt a bottle bill where vendors, supermarkets and other businesses take back bottles from consumers on a deposit basis. He said in past years the bottle bill worked well, but now thinks the solid waste industry blocks it since it is not in their best interest.

DuBois said government should be taken out of the equation and consumers and businesses should take care of removing bottles and cans from the system through a reuse system supported by a bottle bill. DuBois said in states with a bottle bill, consumers drop their bottles or cans in a reversible vending machine set up in supermarkets and get a reward in return, such as a coupon for groceries or a percentage off a purchase. He said in New Jersey there is no such incentive. Steransak agrees with the rewards. She said right now the machine is a novelty at the school so the students use it. She said the only reward they get now, is knowing they are making a difference in the environment. She said she is looking into possible rewards in the future.

The high school will welcome Earth Day with a Car Ban Day on April 21. She said Conservation Club students will encourage everyone to walk, carpool or take public transportation on that day to minimize the carbon footprint.

Email: sportelli@northjersey.com

[Click here for more news from: Clifton](#)