

Northern Valley Regional High School at Old Tappan
Save Our Planet Earth club
http://oths.nvnet.org/oths_clubs/ot_sope/

Advisor: Brian Hanson-Harding, English Department
[.http://mail.nvnet.org/~hanson-harding](http://mail.nvnet.org/~hanson-harding)

The purpose of this club is to raise environmental awareness within the school and community, and to actively make improvements in the environmental issues we all face. This active and large organization gets involved in environmental issues, outside trips, and community activities.

The requirements for club credit include weekly meetings, active participation in school recycling, and local watershed cleanups. Criteria for Service Credit: Members must attend 75% meetings, do three activities, and participate in two fundraisers. Approximately 1/10th of the student population (140 students) have been members of SOPE annually since it began in the 2008-9 school year. *Club advisor Brian Hanson- Harding does not have the figures as to how many student members come from Harrington Park.*

Highlights of the 2011-2012 year include:

- For Earth Day, 2012, the movie Bag It was shown in the NVOT auditorium at three separate assemblies, reaching >90% of the NVOT student population. <http://www.bagitmovie.com/> (From this link: **Bag It** has been garnering awards at film festivals across the nation. What started as a documentary about plastic bags has evolved into a wholesale investigation into plastics and their effect on our waterways, oceans, and even our bodies. Join the Bag It movement and decide for yourself how plastic your life will be).
- Seventeen students participated in the Waste Stream Superhero competition, in which they carried with them any trash they couldn't compost or recycle.
- A Reduce Week was held, during which Club members taught fellow students about how to reduce waste.
- The club researched the impact of disposable bottles and the potential health effects of various chemicals in plastic bottles. An art student designed the logo, and SOPE purchased and promoted the sale of new stainless steel NVOT bottles (available for \$7 each) to students and faculty.
- A third annual Bike-to-School week was held with recognition of participants. CSOPE members promote this emission-free commuting campaign to encourage students and faculty to walk, bike, or carpool to school.

- The club participated in two watershed cleanups, one in the fall and one in the spring. On May 19, 2012, the students cleaned up the reservoir shoreline behind the United Water headquarters on Old Hook Road in Harrington Park.
- Club members ran the school's paper recycling program and provided more barrels for bottle and can recycling.
- The school's organic garden, now in its 5th year, is thriving. Club members collected school kitchen scraps for composting and used the compost for the garden.



The student officer report for 2012 is not available at the time of this SJ submission. The highlights above and photos were provided by the Club Advisor, who also provided the student officer report for 2011.

SOPE Annual Report: June 2011

submitted by advisor Brian Hanson-Harding

I. Goals and Objectives

- To continue and expand recycling programs and help NVOT comply with state laws concerning recycling.
- To educate students and faculty about environmental issues and how to become personally involved.
- To get students and faculty personally engaged with their local environment.
- To encourage reduction at the source of the use of materials that will eventually have to be discarded.
- To educate about and demonstrate organic gardening.

II. Activities and Outcomes

- We recycled paper and cardboard weekly in 93 locations around the school, saving the equivalent of approximately 120 trees.
- We provided bins for bottle and can recycling to any teacher who wanted one. Ten teachers took advantage of this.
- We spent \$1600 trying to buy combination trash and recycling bins to increase recycling in the gym during lunch. Unfortunately, Mr. Armstrong told us that we would not be able to deploy them in the gym or anywhere else in the school.
- We facilitated bottle and can recycling by running a Recycling Awareness Week in late April, which involved the following:
 - we ran the "Get Caught Greenhanded" campaign, in which we rewarded students whom we caught recycling bottles and cans
 - we organized a publicity campaign involving daily announcements and signs
 - we put laminated signs on trash barrels indicating students should not place recyclables there
 - we sold reusable water bottles
 - we made "Bottle-Free Zone" signs for any teacher interested in banning disposable bottles from his/her classroom

- We sold flower bulbs as a fundraiser in October.
- We held an October cleanup in Closter in coordination with United Water. We received a Bergen County Clean Communities Department mini-grant for doing so.
- We held an April cleanup in Norwood in coordination with United Water.
- We held a Waste Stream Superhero competition in which 15 students and carried all their trash and recycling with them for a week with the purpose of reducing and keeping track of the waste they generate.
- We sold NVOT water bottles made of BPA-free plastic, with a logo designed by an art student, in an effort to both raise funds and encourage students and faculty to reduce their consumption of disposable water bottles.
- We sold NVOT hot drink tumblers, with a logo designed by an art student, in an effort to encourage students and faculty to reduce their consumption of disposable hot beverage cups.
- We held an Earth Day program in which we showed a portion of the movie *Tapped*, about the environmental and health impacts of America's consumption of bottled water. We offered three assemblies that attracted over 500 students.
- We maintained and expanded our organic garden, with a garden committee of over a dozen members. Mrs. Scherb brought her cooking classes to harvest and use our herbs. We distributed herbs and vegetables to anyone who could use them.
- We kept our compost bin going with scraps from the cafeteria, thereby reducing trash.
- We held an Emission-Free Commuting week in October and again in April in which students and faculty were given coupons for free frozen yogurt for commuting to school by walking, bicycling, skateboarding, scootering, or carpooling.
- The officers determined that they really want to put combination trash and recycling bins in the North Gym bleachers during lunch, and we researched to find suitable containers for that purpose, and are planning to purchase them for the school.
- Most importantly, and new this year, we held 16 "SOPE Forums" in the Auxiliary Gym. During these forums one or two SOPE members would put on a presentation -- either a video or PowerPoint -- dealing with one environmental issue. This gave individuals a chance to do research and share what they'd learned; it also exposed our members to a lot of information about environmental concerns. Our forums are generally 15 minutes long and begin at 11:10, after students have eaten lunch. Attendance has been good, with usually between 50 and 100 students.

- We maintained a SOPE bulletin board in the North Cafeteria with information about environmental issues in school.
- We made two Green Teacher awards to teachers who have been outstanding green role models.
- We installed a bin for the recycling of rechargeable batteries outside the North Cafeteria.

III. Community Service

Much of what we did could be considered community service, especially the recycling and the cleanups.

IV. Areas of Concern

1. If it were not for SOPE, this school would not be meeting its legal obligation to recycle. We are glad to help out the school in this way, but we have some concerns:

a. While we do have some bins for bottles and cans in the halls, there are not enough of them in the gym and cafeterias. Those teachers who monitor those areas have suggested that we have one recycling barrels for each trash can and that recycling barrels be placed in they gym bleachers along with trash cans. For this reason, we are planning to purchase combination trash and recycling barrels.

b. We think trash cans and recycling barrels should be paired together throughout the halls of the school. Wherever there is a trash can, there should be a place to recycle.

c. Huge amounts of recyclables are thrown out on the playing fields, especially during track season. We need recycling containers out there.

d. We are very disappointed that we spent \$1600 for recycling containers that we cannot use. We understand that there are fire safety concerns, but we think the school should be more pro-active abOut encouraging recycling. We have been told that if kids aren't using the bins, then there's no point in putting them out, and that we should expect kids to walk to the nearest bin to recycle. But we think the scarcity of recycling bins in the school sends the wrong message to students, indicating that the school doesn't consider recycling to be a priority.

e. We are very concerned about the number of recycling bins in the gym at lunch! At the beginning of the year, there were four barrels in the gym. Then it was reduced down to two. Recently, there has been only one. That is not enough for the entire gym.

2. We think it is incumbent upon the school to encourage and model socially responsible habits. Single-driver commuting is wasteful and unnecessarily polluting, and we think the school should do whatever it can to encourage students to commute more carbon-neutral ways such as carpooling, walking, bicycling, and taking the bus.

There are too many cars driving to this school, consuming gasoline, creating carbon emissions, and creating traffic congestion. We are very distressed to hear, even with all the parking lot space we have, that the school is considering purchasing and leveling a nearby house in order to create more parking space.

The school should take action on this issue to discourage irresponsible behavior, to reduce traffic congestion, and to improve the health of our students.

3. Food waste is a very large part of our waste stream. We tried to collect some of the vegetative waste from the kitchen to put in our compost bin, but our efforts were shut down by Mr. Armstrong when a few of our composters missed picking up the compost scraps in February when there were schedule irregularities--one day school was dismissed early, and another day there was an unusual schedule for another reason. We think this should be given another chance. Even more importantly, our school should look into the long-term possibility of engaging in food waste recycling, in which food waste is separated from other waste, picked up by a truck, and delivered to a plant where it is turned into either organic fertilizer or biofuel. This could save the district money in the long run.

4. We think our SOPE Forums could be beneficial to all students, not just SOPE members. However, it's hard to get students to come at the end of lunch, which is when they are held. It would be easier if students could eat their lunches in the Auxiliary Gym (or another venue large enough to hold about 100 students). We would be willing to take responsibility for cleaning up the gym if we were given permission to try this out on a trial basis.

V.

Officers 10-11

Alexandra Kontos

Anna-Kate Miller

Rachel Yu

Joyce Kim

Alison Su

Kenneth Mok

Jae-son Song