

Boonton students focus on Highlands water resources

'Main Street Philanthropy' at high school



Photo by Anthony Lusardi

Main Street Philanthropy

The Highlands Coalition received a special visit from students of Boonton High School. Four students who are part of “Main Street Philanthropy,” which teaches students about non-profit organizations, present a check of \$387 to the Highlands Coalition. From left are: Yale Levey, master ambassador of Main Street Philanthropy, sophomore Chris Crevani, sophomore Sameer Ahmad, junior William Cartelli, Julia Somers, executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, junior Conor Sikora and Robin Cornelison, ambassador of Main Street Philanthropy.

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BOONTON — It’s called “Main Street Philanthropy” and it’s apparently a popular concept in town.

A group of about 20 students from Boonton High School visited the office of [New Jersey Highlands Coalition](#), located on 508 Main St. on Tuesday, Nov. 22.

The field trip was part of a high school class that involves students with an 501c3 non-profit program known “Main Street Philanthropy,” which allows students to learn about non-profit groups, how they are organized and operated, and how to become involved.

“This is an opportunity that most kids don’t get in high school,” said Julia Somers, executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.

“They are learning about non-profits; how they’re organized, how they rely on volunteers, and people’s generosity. A part of this is learning to take responsibility and how to raise money for a good cause.”

Several students were divided into teams and were instructed to select a charity, learn about it, and then raise a certain amount of funds for that charity. Charities chosen by the Boonton students included a community soup kitchen at Boonton’s First Presbyterian Church, Home for Good Dogs Rescue Inc., in Berkeley Heights, Habitat for Humanity, in Morristown, and Clean Ocean Action, in Highlands.

Five particular students choose the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, a diverse network of organizations, from local to national, that works to protect the New Jersey Highlands and to preserve the quality and quantity of drinking water both for the 850,000 people in the area as well as the more than four million people in surrounding areas who depend on Highlands water.

The Highlands is about 60 miles, about 860,000 acres, in the northern state area, but the whole Highlands stretches from mid-Pennsylvania to Connecticut. In New Jersey, the Highlands encompasses 244 municipalities in 16 different counties.

At the Highlands Coalition office, the students were taught the history of the coalition, how it is run, and the group's current activities. A video was also shown on the coalition's goals and efforts in recent years.

"Boonton in the Highlands and it's surprising that most don't know why the Highlands are important," said Somers.

"So it's great that the students with the help of this program are learning about the environment they live in and where their water comes from."

Sixteen-year-old junior William Cartelli, from Boonton, would say so as well.

"The field trip was very informative," said Cartelli.

"Most people don't know about how vulnerable our environment is to pollution and that developments impact our water supply in the worst way. We really support the Highlands Coalition and are really grateful for what they do for the community."

Cartelli was paired up with four classmates, junior Conor Sikora, sophomore Sameer Ahmad, sophomore Chris Crevani, and junior Xavier Salazar.

Together, they selected the Highlands Coalition as their charity and formed the group "Populoterrae;" which is Latin for "People for Earth."

"This is a learning opportunity that gave everyone a chance to learn what goes on in our community," said 16-year-old sophomore Sameer Ahmad, from Boonton.

After the video presentation and some questions and answers, "Populoterrae" presented the Highlands Coalition with a check of \$387, gathered by their own fundraising in the community.

For more information on the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, visit their website at <http://www.njhighlandscoalition.org/>. and to learn more about Main Street Philanthropy, visit the website at <http://mainstreetphilanthropy.org/>.