



Press Release

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For Immediate Release
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Fifth-Graders Win First Place in Philadelphia Zoo Unless Contest

(Fallsington, PA) - Fifth-grade students from Fallsington and Oxford Valley Elementary School recently won first place in their division for the Philadelphia Zoo Unless Contest. The "Planet Protectors," along with gifted support teacher Sherri Cohoon, helped raise funds for the Humboldt Penguins and created a campaign to "Reduce Waste in the First Place." The Unless Contest is a year-long, project-based contest where students create real solutions to environmental issues in their lives. Nearly 3,000 students in over 100 classes participated this year.

This dedicated group of 12 students raised over \$1,000 for the Punta San Juan Reserve, who work directly with the Humboldt Penguins on the coasts of Peru. The students created a GoFundMe and hosted snack sales at their schools. They also initiated a reusable water bottle incentive at the schools by offering free penguin stickers to students who avoid using single-use plastics. In addition, they created several educational videos [and a website](#) to teach others about environmental issues, how to "Reduce Waste in the First Place," and how to incorporate the Six R's of Sustainability (rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair.)

They also met Dr. Tom Smith, Pennsbury Superintendent, to inquire about improving their schools' current recycling efforts. Additionally, the students contacted local Waste Management authorities and applied for a grant to purchase Recycle Right bags for their schools. They also planned a Recycled Work of Art Contest and invited local grocery stores to participate in a "Bring Your Own Bag" incentive to further encourage reusing and reducing waste in the school community.

"The Philadelphia Zoo Unless Contest is such a great way to spread awareness of environmental issues and the effects that our actions have on our planet and the animals that inhabit it," said Cohoon.

Robyn Rowlands' fifth grade class at Quarry Hill Elementary and Eileen Koch's third grade class at Afton Elementary also participated in the Unless Contest. Rowlands' class received an Honorable Mention from the Philadelphia Zoo for their participation.

"It encourages our youngest learners to take action and become stewards of change!" said Cohoon. "Not only has this project enlightened my students about the simple measures they and others can take to reduce waste in the first place, but it has shown them the impact that they, as fifth graders, can have on making a difference in the world! My hope is that they continue this campaign well into their middle and high school years and that they always remain as concerned and involved as they are now."

Cphoon's students are looking forward to continuing their efforts and being a part of the district's first-ever "Green Team."

"They say you learn best by teaching others, and this opportunity has offered them that and so much more," added Cohoon. "Working to educate others has helped expand their own knowledge on a topic that truly interests them. The learning that has occurred with this project is immeasurable, and I know that they and I will remember this experience for a long time!"

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