

Earth Day, Three Ways

From Rabat with Love



Going green, going local: RAS students plant indigenous species on campus (photo: D. Boyle).

By Diana Boyle

Earth Day 2010 had a special significance in Rabat, Morocco.

To mark the historic 40th anniversary of Earth Day, the Earth Day Network identified six cities worldwide—Buenos Aires, New York, Shanghai, Washington, DC, Mumbai and Rabat—as “green cities.” Last April, Rabat hosted one of the largest Earth Day events in the world.

A week later, Rabat American School (RAS) had its own celebration, with hands-on activities that focused on local and global environmental problems. RAS teachers Tania Ash and Judi Meddoun have been facilitating RAS Earth Day celebrations for three years, and each year is better than the last!

This year, students in Grades Pre-k through 5 planted indigenous plants in a large garden plot, and learned about the environmental benefits of planting indigenous species. “You don’t have to waste a lot of water on them,” in the words of one Grade 3 student.

In another activity, students became fish and had to navigate a river with plastic and other litter “floating” in it. They learned first-hand how difficult it is for other species to live with our litter and waste.

In a third, mathematics were involved: students represented the gallons of water needed to produce various items. Did you know it takes 1,800 gallons of water to make a pair of jeans? Or 2,847 gallons of water to make that chocolate bar you ate? Using a “water droplet” stamp, the students created visual representations of these huge amounts of water.

Middle School students from the secondary Ecology Club ran an activity in which the Elementary children made seed balls. Seed balls, also known as “earth dumplings” or “seed bombs,” are a method of encasing seeds in a mixture of clay

and compost. This protects the seeds by preventing them from drying out, being eaten, or blowing away; some North American First Nations tribes used seed balls to transport their seeds. More recently, seed balls have been used to add greenery to degraded urban areas in New York, Chicago, and now Rabat!

A local Moroccan glass artist was on hand to demonstrate his art, in which almost all of his glass is “used.” The children were enchanted with his beautiful little animal figurines, and the teachers with his jewelry.

A booklet of tips, also listing “green” businesses and environmental organizations, was given out to all RAS families.

Morocco is a beautiful country with endless natural wonders, and RAS students learned a few ways to help preserve them. In Rabat, Earth Day should be every day! ●

Valencia’s Tale of Trash and Treasure

By Gail Neff

Thinking green at Colegio Internacional de Carabobo (CIC) in Valencia, Venezuela used to be the philosophy of only a few individuals, working hard to bring recycling to the fore. This year, however, with the offering of an after-school elementary “Green Team” and the initiation of a faculty Committee for the Environment, CIC has officially, fully entered the “green zone!”

Our high school students are collecting soda cans and crushing them in preparation for recycling. They have also taken responsibility for ensuring that as much used paper as possible is recycled from every classroom and office. Containers for cans and paper are visible throughout the school, and emptied by our students weekly.

Several energetic teachers, with the help of the elementary “Green Team” students, have been working on creating “earth benches” on the school’s nature trail. One is an example of rammed earth construction and the other is a sculpture made of cob (an adobe-like material) that re-

sembles an iguana—our campus is a refuge for the native lizard.

During Earth Week, students took trash bags as they walked along the school’s nature trail, where our high school students have designed a variety of nature lessons to teach to younger students.

Here and there, classes were busily engaged in crafts using materials that are generally thrown away. One hallway featured a “Junk Museum,” in which students created fun and useful things from junk. A featured artist also shared her wealth of ideas for making beautiful works of art out of “junk.”

All classes were encouraged to bring waste-free snacks or lunches during Earth Week. A brochure was prepared to explain the rationale for reducing our waste by avoiding packaging that cannot be re-used. It was heartwarming to hear students respond with, “My father says we aren’t going to use paper napkins at home any more!”

Many students have since made the switch to a waste-free snack every day! And our lunch caterer has generously acceded our request to offer only reusable, metal cutlery.



A local artist makes art out of “junk” as students look on (photo: CIC Valencia).

Topping off the week, the entire school gathered for our first annual Earth Day Assembly. Students participated with songs and poems, demonstrations, and recognitions. It was a time to celebrate how far we’ve come as “green thinkers” and also to move forward with our initiatives. Let us better appreciate and care for our earth. ●

Shanghai Rallies, Catwalks for Mother Earth

By Daniel Jubert

For Earth Week last spring, teachers and students at Shanghai Community International School’s (SCIS) Pudong Lower School set out to create a week of activities, learning, projects, and fun geared around Earth Day. The planning and preparation started months earlier, when students and teachers recognized the importance of saving our most trea-

sured resource of all: Earth herself!

Led by the students and teachers from the SCIS “Green Team,” the school community enjoyed a fantastic week. Students were treated to a variety of engaging events, including a visit from the local non-profit environmental organization Greenovate; a school-wide “earth hour,” where all electricity was turned off; a visit by award-winning author Trevor Lai, who discussed his book about



You go, girl! SCIS’s Harry Choi rocks some refuse (photo: SCIS).

saving the planet; and a fundraiser to help save the rainforests.

Classrooms also got involved, and students created solar ovens, made videos, tracked their waste impact, and pledged to change their habits.

The biggest event of the week was an Earth Day Rally, which included a teacher-staged reader’s theater production of *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, Mandarin classes performing a skit about going “green,” a showcasing of student posters, poems and essays focused on saving the earth, and an electrifying Recycled Fashion Show hosted by SCIS Grade 5 students and featuring re-used discarded materials! ●

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