

Wild about worms



Ty Smeins

LIKELY you are asking yourself, "What in the world is vermicomposting?" You wouldn't be alone in wondering this. Most people have no clue vermicomposting is worm farming. But at Shanghai Community International School's Pudong campus, everyone is crazy about its worms.

It all started when IB students John Barrett, Richard Han, Jack Choi, John Lee and Yang Ziyao decided something should be done about the number of plastic bottles that were discarded on campus. After seeing men collecting heap- ing bags of plastic on the Shanghai streets and selling them to recycling centers, the boys came up with a brilliant plan.

After borrowing some start-up revenue to purchase plastic recycling bins, the students labeled each one and distributed information about the plastic recycling project. At first, it didn't take off. Students continued to toss their trash into garbage bins. That was until one of the boys came up with the brilliant idea to place small basketball hoops above the bins. This idea was a slam dunk and soon the bins were overflowing. However, this was still a long way from worms.

After selling the first batch of plastic to a local recycling center, the boys found themselves with a handful of money and no idea what to do with it. That's when their biology teacher suggested using the money to purchase start-up materials for vermicomposting. The boys had already reduced the amount of material waste around school and thought it was a logical step to begin reducing organic waste.

Immediately, they set to the task of learning more about how to build a worm farm. They began building the containers where the worms would turn cardboard and vegetables into compost. This compost could then be used on the organic gardens that are used as part of the middle school science curriculum. The boys enjoyed the fact that their idea would benefit the environment.

"The amount of compost produced won't be overwhelming at first," said Barrett, "but we hope the awareness of vermicomposting and just doing a little thing that makes a big difference catches on."

The future of the boys' project appears to be limitless in its impact on the school. The major goal is developing sustainability. "It has been great making a difference in the school," Barrett said. "The next step is to train the next generation to take over what we started."



Jack Choi (left) and Richard Han collect plastic bottles.