

Helena Puche, Illinois, USA

## Believe in Green Expo

### Eco Spot Goals

1. Educate the District's students and community on how to live a greener and environmentally friendly way.
2. Broadened the visitors' perspective on environmental problems.
3. Provide an opportunity for attendees to purchase green products and services for their personal use and their homes.
4. Provide recycling opportunities for certain household goods.

**Summary:** Looking to engage the community on a path for a sustainable future (3, 6, 10, 12), and through the District 181 Foundation, we organized a Green Fair (8, 9). The goals were to showcase District 181 students' activities for the environment, and to educate and inspire the community to make environmentally-conscious lifestyle changes to improve their quality of life. For that purpose, we invited Businesses, Non profits and School Groups to participate in the event, and encouraged them to create interactive learning opportunities for the community, e.g. the Girls Scouts organized a "Trash for Treasure" activity in which visitors created an art project with recyclable materials. Inspired by other Green Expos (2, 4, 5), we invited Student Science Fair projects, and art competition pieces made from recyclable materials to be showcased at the Expo. Singing groups and bands made presentations throughout the day; Speakers gave seminars on recycling, landscaping, health and environmentally friendly automobiles; Recycling services (SCARCE, Waste Management) were provided to the community (crayons, rulers, computers, telephones, batteries, eye glasses, buttons), and Paper Shredding (Hinsdale Bank). All of these activities are in tune with community participation and voice the importance of our actions for the environment. The intended audiences were 4000 students from Hinsdale, Clarendon Hills, Burr Ridge, Oak Brook and Willowbrook. Visitors were invited to fill up a poster board with 10 Things to do at home to protect the environment and Biodiversity (1, 7, 11), making biodiversity meaningful through education (13, 14) that can be put into action at home and have lifelong consequences. This conservation action was advertized using a blog (<http://bigd181fdn.blogspot.com/>) 287 people visited the blog by 3/20/11 but the visits increased to 2,819 people by 4/26/11.

### Reflections/Next Steps

One way to engage the target audience effectively using the blog might be to make an art or poster competition that will be posted on the blog. All participating children, their parents, relatives, friends, and friends of friends, could vote for the project that they like best. That way, the blog will be visited by a bigger audience who will also find out about the activities and goals of the District 181 Foundation and Green Expo, hopefully becoming "viral." I will try a web page next time since it seems more dynamic. In the blog, you can only post thoughts and it is difficult to engage people to visit and post their thoughts as well. Posting pictures of pictures of the activities after the Expo and advertisement through the school PTO might engage attendees to visit the blog beyond the event.

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