

A climate for learning; NBHS students ACE environmental lessons

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NEW BEDFORD — Next time you start to toss something in the trash, consider this: the average American produces enough garbage in one year to fill 21 football fields.

Students at New Bedford High School recently learned that staggering statistic and more in a "Climate Change Challenge" series of assemblies held by SEEAL (Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance) Partners, Marion Institute and Blessed Energy, in collaboration with ACE (Alliance for Climate Education). "These presentations are not doom and gloom," said Alan Palm, the New England Lead Educator for ACE. "They are focused on opportunity and inspiring kids to be part of the solution."

With emphasis on climate change and what people can do to help reduce their carbon footprint, each of the four 50-minute assemblies at NBHS featured speakers well-versed in the subject.

They included Zoe Hansen-Dibello, Sustainability Education and Youth Coordinator at The Marion Institute, and Tem Blessed, a local hip hop artist and Green Coordinator for YouthBuild New Bedford, along with an interactive PowerPoint presentation from Palm.

The PowerPoint "ain't your old man's PowerPoint," said ACE's Head of Marketing, Matt Stewart. Rather, he said, it is "focused on building an engaging, animated, multimedia experience (with text messaging!) for climate science that sticks with apathetic teens."

Palm posed questions during the PowerPoint, encouraging the students to speak up with their answers. "It's important for the youth to have a voice about this," said Hansen-Dibello. She talked about the problems and their solutions, citing suggestions such as alternative transportation methods and buying local food products.

The presentation wrapped up with Blessed's performance of "Green Anthem," which he collaborated with 3rd Eye Unlimited to create. "I love seeing young people doing constructive things with their talents," he told the audience. "Take the passion and ability you have and choose what to do with them."

Before leaving, Palm made a couple suggestions for students to help the cause right here in New Bedford: Start an environmental club at the school or take part in the Connecting for Change, a solution-based conference put on by The Marion

Institute which takes place on Oct. 21—23 this year. Students were also encouraged to sign up with ACE for more information. Hansen-Dibello said that between 75 and 100 students signed up during the first two assemblies. "It's good for the teachers to see their kids coming up here and to see so many people getting inspired," she said.

SEEAL's mission is to increase the capacity of its partners organizations to provide quality environmental education and stewardship in Southeastern Massachusetts. ACE is a national nonprofit organization that aims to educate high school students about climate change and urges them to take action in their schools, communities and every day life.

This "Climate Change Challenge" program, has visited more than 7,000 students in 15 schools in Southern Massachusetts.

For more information about about SEEAL, visit seeal.org, and for ACE, visit www.acespace.org. For more information about the Connecting for Change conference, visit www.marioninstitute.org/connecting-for-change.

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