

OLL goes green, joins religious-environmental program

On Friday Nov. 10, Our Lady of the Lake School in Verona became the second faith-based school in New Jersey to join the Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools program. The school welcomed Stacey Kennealy, coordinator of the religious-environmental program, and Rev. Fletcher Harper, executive director

of GreenFaith, to celebrate with an assembly for students and staff.

"Ms. Kennealy and Reverend Harper [spoke] about our responsibility to care for God's creation and how our school is becoming a good environmental steward by greening the way we operate," said Sister Mary Agnes Sullivan, princi-

pal. "I believe our entire school community will respond well to this important message."

The Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools program is a yearlong collaborative pilot project between GreenFaith and the Center for Health, Environment and Justice.

As New Jersey's interfaith coali-

tion for the environment, GreenFaith inspires, educates and mobilizes people of diverse spiritual backgrounds to deepen their relationship with the sacred in nature and restore the environment for future generations. CHEJ provides the tools to build strong, healthy communities where people can live, work, learn, play and pray.

Students will continue to be an integral part of the program during the year, and eighth grade students Julia Prout and Billy Inacio represent the entire student body as members of the program committee.

The Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools program will help 10 New Jersey faith-based schools implement environmentally sustainable practices over the course of this year. By targeting the areas of energy conservation, non-toxic products (such as "green" cleaners), integrated pest management,

indoor air quality, and recycling, the program will make these schools safer for students and the environment. The program will also encourage schools to interpret religious teachings in relation to a new area of critical concern: the well being of the environment.

"The Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools Program gives our school the encouragement to educate and mobilize our students as well as the parish community in the area of Environmental Health," said Sister Jeanne Goyette, leader of the committee at OLL.

"The support of experts as well as valuable resources will enable us to promote environmentally healthy initiatives within a faith context."

Kennealy and Harper commemorated the start of the program at the assembly by presenting school leaders with the program's emblematic Green Flag. The flag

celebrates the school's commitment to environmental stewardship, while also symbolizing their progress throughout the year.

OLL is welcomed into the program alongside Resurrection School in Jersey City, St. Patrick School in Chatham, Solomon Schechter Jewish Day School of Essex and Union, and Al-Hikmah Islamic Elementary School in Prospect Park. "We are very pleased to have such a diverse group of faith-based schools joining the program," Kennealy said. "We want to spread this message widely, and these schools will be leaders in their communities and faith traditions."

For information about the Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools program, contact Kennealy at skennealy@greenfaith.org. For an application, visit www.greenflagschools.org and look under "What's New."



PHOTO COURTESY OF OUR LADY OF THE LAKE SCHOOL

Rev. Fletcher Harper, executive director of GreenFaith, addresses students at Our Lady of the Lake School. OLL recently became the second faith-based school in the state to join the Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools program.

