

In 2006, five Danbury High School students and two advisors came together with a common dissatisfaction: a lack of action in regards to environmental issues in the school and community. With a calculated carbon footprint of 21,251,277 pounds of carbon dioxide emitted each school year, these five students joined together with the goal of spreading awareness and implementing change. This group identified several areas that were lacking in green reform: the non-existent recycling program in our school, the lack of environmental education in elementary schools, the absence of environmental interest in the high school, and the massive amounts of non-biodegradable waste produced from the cafeteria. They agreed that change needed to be implemented in these areas and the first environmental club in Danbury High School's history, The DHS Green Club, was born. Four years later the Green Club continues its mission to increase environmental awareness and diminish the school's impact on local ecology, and is still lead by students motivated and empowered to create lasting change.

Danbury High School serves over 2,800 students in grades 9-12, making it the second largest school in Connecticut. The city of Danbury has a population of roughly 80,000 and is served by only one public high school. Danbury High School faces the problems typical of a 21st century American Public School: chronic overcrowding, staff shortages, and administrative lapses. In the last three years alone there have been three different principals; each transition heralding increased confusion among the faculty and the students. All of this takes place in buildings that are over fifty years old. Due to these reasons, the Green Club has to undertake extraordinary pains to implement even the most basic environmental initiatives to compensate for the administration's oversight on environmental issues. The Club's first and arguably most effective project was the initiation of a school-wide recycling program. Before the Green Club's founding there had been no effort to accommodate the school's formidable recycling needs; roughly 6,000,000 sheets of paper are consumed annually. The recycling program was not funded by the school; the labor and financial burden of establishing reliable paper recycling fell entirely upon the Green Club and its members. The program reached full implementation at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Due to a lack of funding, the Green Club members stockpiled empty boxes of office paper, which were deposited in every classroom and office in the school, for a grand total of 151 boxes. These boxes were for the recycling of paper goods and were emptied weekly by Green Club members during the school day using rolling bins purchased with the proceeds from fundraising initiatives. And thus, Danbury High School's recycling program was implemented and maintained purely by the effort and dedication of Green Club volunteers. A hard fought victory was won at the conclusion of the 2008-2009 school year when the custodial staff began to collect classroom recycling, although, at times, Green Club Members are still called upon to empty overlooked recycling bins. Based on end of year calculations in the 2008-2009 school year, Green Club was responsible for recycling 21% of the 6,000,000 sheets of paper consumed, an outstanding achievement compared to the previous 0%. The cardboard boxes we currently use overflow on a weekly basis and we need bigger, more durable and credible recycling bins to meet the needs of our large school. Each classroom only has a small cardboard box for paper, so we would like to implement plastic bins for this purpose.

Currently, we are working to eliminate the use of Styrofoam in the school district; consequently reducing Styrofoam processing and other forms of carbon/CFC emissions. Styrofoam is made from polystyrene foam, which leaches out toxic chemicals into the food it contains. This is a risk to human health and is not biodegradable. Annually, our school creates 36,000 pounds of non-biodegradable Styrofoam waste per year and 48,600 pounds of plastic waste. We hope to replace the Styrofoam trays with a more environmentally conscious material: sugarcane fiber, which biodegrades within 180 days, along with cornstarch utensils, which biodegrade within 90 days. We petitioned change to the Danbury Board of Education last March. The trays and utensils would cost twice as much as the Styrofoam trays and plastic utensils that are in the cafeteria now. Switching to these trays would mean a dramatic increase in price that the school cannot afford; however, funds from the Live Green, Win Green competition would make this dream a reality.

We also have held a Green Rhythms concert and a Green Change film festival at the Danbury Public library in collaboration with Tri-M and the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) to spread environmental awareness. The proceeds of over \$1,000 from this event and local fundraisers have gone to purchasing 10 acres of rainforest land from the World Land Trust and a handful of permanent rolling depository bins. NAHS donated art, such as baskets made out of newspaper, but we hope to spread GRart

(Green Artwork) on a farther-reaching scale so that environmentalism can be spread across the disciplines and to the elementary schools. We plan to connect with the art departments of other schools in the district to facilitate projects with recycled materials, such as newspaper, to create art. During our planned 2010 Earth Day celebration we will spread environmental awareness and promote the GRart made by students across the school district. Last year we connected with Broadview and Rogers Park Middle Schools to create videos for a contest about green change. This year we are collaborating with the school's film department to produce a full length documentary to air on public access television with the goal of spreading environmental awareness.

In the setting of an overcrowded school without much focus on environmentalism, the money from CL&P's Live Green Win Green competition would not only harvest green change in Danbury High, but the entire community.