Fifth Graders Making a Difference

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Fifth graders at North Bay Elementary school have been learning about the geography of the United States. This includes the regions, climate, and natural resources of our country. The students decided they should become more involved in taking care of our land, so they started brainstorming to come up with ideas that would help them achieve this goal. There were several great ideas hatched during the brainstorming session.

The first idea students discussed was encouraging more participation in the school's recycling effort. The school has a recycling program in place, but recently there has not been much participation school wide. The fifth graders decided to make posters to hang around the school campus to as a reminder for their classmates to bring in their recyclable paper, plastic, and aluminum products. They also discussed possibly having an incentive for the grade level that brings in the most recyclable goods.

Another opportunity to care for our land the students discussed was talking with the art teacher about getting fifty five gallon drums donated that the students can paint. The drums could then be placed on the beach and on public playgrounds so that visitors would have a place to discard their trash. Several students mentioned seeing trash that had been left behind by visitors at the beach or at our parks and thought having more trash receptacles would be a way to see less trash on the ground.



An annual event that takes place in our community is Coastal Cleanup. There is typically very little student involvement in this effort. At the event, volunteers meet on a predetermined day and are assigned different areas of the beach to clean. After the group discussion and brainstorming session, students became more excited about participating in this effort. They had similar ideas to that of the school recycling program. They decided to make posters to make students aware of the event as it got closer and to meet with the principal to offer some sort of incentive for the class with the most participants at Coastal Cleanup.



Before Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, our community had curbside recycling. We have not had this service since then. Many of the students were too young to remember life before Hurricane Katrina, and even if they do remember they were so young that they probably were not aware of curbside recycling. They discussed the need for this service to return to our community and believed that there would be more participation in the effort now than there was before Katrina. They believe that people have become more aware of recycling over the last few years, and they believe that people would make an effort to make this service work.

After studying the geography of the United States, the fifth grade students have become more aware of our land and the resources that it provides for us. They have also learned that if they do not take care of the land, the resources and the living things

that depend on those resources for survival could become threatened. These students have decided to take what they have learned and attempt to educate others in the community. They have applied what they have learned and want to use it to make a difference in their community and in the lives of the other people that live in and visit our beautiful Gulf Coast. Hopefully the lessons they have learned will stay with them for a very long time and will have a lasting impact on the way they think and live.