

SERT Spotlight

April-May 2020



It's Easy Being Green!

For nearly eight years, Stephen Knolls School (SKS) has been integrating best practices for conserving energy and water use, reducing solid waste, increasing recycling, and restoring habitats. Stephen Knolls School is part of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and provides a special education program for students who range in age from three to twenty-one under the direction of principal Kim Redgrave. Collaborative lesson plans are created at SKS to highlight environmental topics such as energy and water conservation and community cleanup efforts. Some students use recycled items to create science and art projects; some students do greenhouse lessons on planting, maintaining plants and harvesting fruits and vegetables. Student instruction includes how to maintain and sustain a healthy environment.

At Stephen Knolls, green initiatives, intentional lesson planning, partnerships with families and community outreach, demonstrate a sincere commitment to reducing the school's carbon footprint. Visitors who tour SKS can observe lessons which take place in the greenhouse, in outdoor classrooms, in the butterfly garden, and on the adaptive playground. Students have created compost bins, vegetables gardens, and indoor gardens that adorn each classroom. Sensory boxes contain seeds, collected recycled items, and even fruits and vegetables to allow the exploration of these items, and they relate to the environment. Students created light switch covers and other signage to encourage students, staff, and

family members to turn off the lights, and recycle. Students and staff also use the new water bottle filling station and fountain. SKS has eight bird houses, a rain barrel, a “no-wow” zone, and wheelchair accessible paths on campus. The landscaping, gardens, and 1,000 tulips are planted and maintained by the students, staff, families, and community partners.

Stephen Knolls School is a certified Maryland Green School and has submitted an application for recertification to the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE). As a Maryland Green School, the Stephen Knolls staff use the green school framework of environmental literacy to enhance the instructional program. This instruction is planned and coordinated to meet the objectives of the green school application.



Stephen Knolls School achieved and maintains their MD Green School status thanks in part to the many ways they work with students and plan for environmental literacy. The school’s case managers, therapists, and specialists purposefully incorporate the use of MD Green School content or processes in order to help students and families understand how their decisions and actions affect the environment. These practices demonstrate how to keep our environment healthy and sustainable.

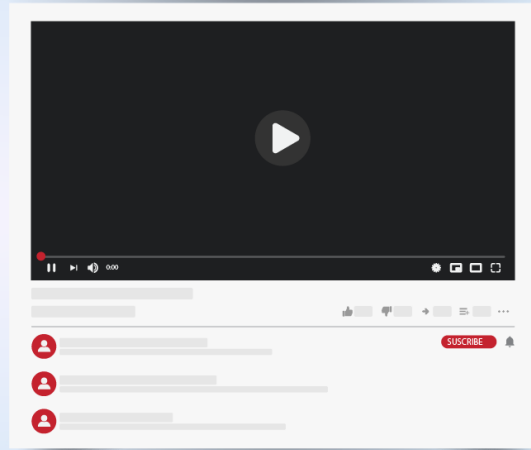


The Stephen Knolls greenhouse hosts 189 different kinds of plants, including six different kinds of vegetables. Twenty percent of SKS case managers teach lessons that take place in the greenhouse. The greenhouse allows SKS students to investigate different types of plants, the anatomy of plants, soil, and watering needs.

SKS students participate in a wide variety of environmental learning tasks such as: using recycled materials to create rain sticks, aquariums, light switch covers, decorative doors and handcrafted paper. Learning spaces such as the gymnasium, have been transformed into a camping station as well as an indoor garden.

Cheers to Principal Redgrave and the Stephen Knolls School community who intentionally impart environmental awareness to their students and staff. This commitment to environmental literacy along with student and community involvement is a prominent part of the school’s culture. Keep up the great work!

SERT VIDEO CONTEST



This year, the School Energy and Recycling Team (SERT) program sponsored its first video contest for all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students and staff. The challenge was to create an original video that promotes awareness of environmental stewardship. SERT received 22 wonderfully creative entries from 12 different schools representing all grade levels. The video contest focused on the importance of conserving energy, the significance of recycling effectively and reducing solid waste, or highlight the specific activities of the school-based SERT team.

Congratulations to our 2020 SERT Video Contest winners listed and hyperlinked below. All of our participants did an excellent job with their entries, and we applaud their efforts.

CONSERVATION CLIP CATEGORY:

- [“Helping Our Environment”](#) by Little Bennett Elementary School; Tricia Smith, sponsor
- [“Have a Pencil; Give a Pencil”](#) by Rocky Hill Middle School; Michelle Smetanick, sponsor
- *Please note that SERT did not receive any conservation clips submitted by high schools.*

PSA CATEGORY:

- [“Mustang Mural”](#) by Potomac Elementary School; Jasmine Aviles Vega, sponsor
- [“A Cleaner Future”](#) by Eastern Middle School, Warren Scheib, sponsor
- [“The Earth and You”](#) by Northwood High School; Iris Schwarz, sponsor

Second Quarter SERT Energy Awards

The SERT program is pleased to announce that our schools made significant efforts to save energy during the second quarter (December 2019-February 2020) of the 2019-2020 academic year. During these challenging budgetary times, any avoidable operating costs will have a positive impact on our educational initiatives. More than sixty percent of our schools demonstrated great energy management behavior and showed energy savings compared to their baseline. Due to the systemwide conservation efforts, and also thanks to the milder winter weather, MCPS was able to achieve a five percent reduction in energy use compared to the baseline.

Schools achieving top energy cost avoidance as compared to their baseline usage are eligible to receive quarterly monetary awards. The baseline for each school is an average of their prior five school years of the same quarter. Schools without an established baseline are eligible to receive a monetary Great Energy Management (GEM) award which is based on demonstrated active participation in the SERT program and energy-efficient behavior. We applaud of all of our students and staff for their commitment to conservation and sustainability, and congratulate the following 62 MCPS schools for earning SERT energy awards:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Arcola Elementary School	Lakewood Elementary School
Beall Elementary School	Spark M. Matsunaga Elementary School
Bradley Hills Elementary School	Meadow Hall Elementary School
Brown Station Elementary School	Monocacy Elementary School
Cannon Road Elementary School	William Tyler Page Elementary School
Rachel Carson Elementary School	Piney Branch Elementary School
Cedar Grove Elementary School	Rock Creek Forest Elementary School
Clopper Mill Elementary School	Seven Locks Elementary School
Cloverly Elementary School	Sherwood Elementary School
Cold Spring Elementary School	Flora M. Singer Elementary School
Cresthaven Elementary School	Snowden Farm Elementary School
Capt. James Daly Elementary School	South Lake Elementary School
Damascus Elementary School	Stonegate Elementary School
Fallsmead Elementary School	Strathmore Elementary School
Galway Elementary School	Summit Hall Elementary School
Georgian Forest Elementary School	Washington Grove Elementary School
William B. Gibbs, Jr. Elementary School	Westbrook Elementary School
Goshen Elementary School	Wheaton Woods Elementary School
Greencastle Elementary School	Whetstone Elementary School
Jones Lane Elementary School	Woodlin Elementary School
Kensington Parkwood Elementary School	Wyngate Elementary School

Second Quarter SERT Energy Awards (continued)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Argyle Middle School	Newport Mill Middle School
John T. Baker Middle School	North Bethesda Middle School
Cabin John Middle School	Parkland Middle School
Roberto Clemente Middle School	Rosa M. Parks Middle School
Gaithersburg Middle School	Redland Middle School
Herbert Hoover Middle School	Ridgeview Middle School
Kingsview Middle School	Rocky Hill Middle School
Neelsville Middle School	Silver Creek Middle School

HIGH SCHOOLS

Clarksburg High School	Paint Branch High School
Thomas Edison High School of Technology	Seneca Valley High School

If you're looking for some excellent environmental-related resources and activities to enjoy while staying safe at home, check out these links:

- <https://captainplanetfoundation.org/programs/cpf-resources/learning-at-home/>
- <https://maeoe.org/resource-library/home-based-environmental-education-resources>
- <https://greenschoolsnationalnetwork.org/resources/>
- <https://www.energizeschools.org/distancelearning.html>
- <https://www.greenschoolsalliance.org/resources/category/1>
- <https://ecorise.org/parent/>
- <https://www.energizeschools.org/curriculum.html>
- <https://cleanet.org/index.html>
- <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>
- <https://www.energizeschools.org/curriculum.html>

