

JCF helps grow budding environmentalists

By Jennifer Bahney Assistant Editor Updated Jun 10, 2016 ☐ (...)

CIRCLEVILLE — Young men at the Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility (JCF) are learning some important lessons about ecology and sustainability — lessons that could lead to great things in the future. About 20 students from three facilities gathered at Circleville on Friday for an Earth Day Sustainability Retreat to talk about what they’ve learned about reusing and recycling.

“We want to set the kids up for success,” said Anna Karousis, Circleville JCF systems improvement administrator. “We’re headed toward a green economy, and teaching the importance of sustainability will get them ready for the job market in jobs that pay more.”

The retreat participants from Indian River, Cuyahoga Hills, and Circleville JCF were chosen to attend by their superintendents based on achievement and positive behavior.

Eighteen-year old M., who made a “Roots of Success” presentation on the importance of recycling, said he’s concerned about waste and what it’s doing to the planet.

“When there are cigarette butts and litter everywhere, it just creates more pollution for the landfills,” he said. “But the pollution is reversible; we can do things to stop it.”

M. hopes to pursue a career in the culinary arts and is learning how to grow food in the facility’s aquaponics

greenhouse. The students raise tilapia fish on premises, then use the fish waste to fertilize crops that Circleville JCF donates to the Mid-Ohio Food Bank.

“The entire system was built by the youth,” said Paul Rybicki, Circleville JCF systems coordinator. “They cut the wood, drilled the holes, and did all the planning and growing. They also make sure the fish and plants all have the right pH for optimum growth.”

Rybicki said that the aquaponics program, which has been in existence for about a year, teaches the boys concepts of science, chemistry and engineering.

Seventeen-year-old M.C. said the retreat has given him a better understanding of ecology, recycling, and how pollution works.

“When you pollute the air, it goes into the clouds, then comes back down to the earth and into the aquifers and groundwater,” he said. “It’s your choice to stop the cycle if you have the knowledge.”

Friday was also the JCF high school graduation. According to Superintendent Phillip Elms, 19 students graduated this year, compared to five last year. He credits the teachers and a positive environment for the increase.

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