

# Students get hands-on lesson in water pollution

MUA employees made presentations to four groups of third-grade students that showed how the water cycle works.

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MOUNT LAUREL — One student shook fertilizer on the grass.

Others applied pesticides on the farm, motor oil on the roadway, and sludge on the factory.

Three third-graders sprayed water to simulate rain.

And the entire class watched as contaminants from the land surfaces washed into the water supply.

Using an environmental model supplied by the township Municipal Utilities Authority, students at the Fleetwood Elementary School were shown how water is collected and gets polluted. MUA employees directed the children to sprinkle fake pollutants, using Kool-Aid, candy sprinkles and cinnamon, onto the model.

With a little “rain,” the materials were swept into the model’s river trench and deposited into a small lake. The colors in the edible contaminants turned the clear lake water red and brown.



NANCY ROKOS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bernheimer, the MUA’s operations supervisor, holds a photo of a township water tank during his visit to Heather Korenkiewicz’s class.

“It’s getting polluted,” Chuck Bernheimer, the MUA’s operations supervisor, explained to the students. “It got polluted from the things we do every day.”

The children responded with looks of disgust. Several said, “Ewww.”

Third-grade teacher Heather Korenkiewicz said her students recently studied water during their science lessons. She said the model helped illustrate more clearly how the water cycle works.

“They can actually see it,” Korenkiewicz said. “It’s a good hands-on lesson.”

On Monday, MUA employees

made presentations to four groups of third-grade students that showed how the water cycle works. Before working with the model, Bernheimer gave an interactive presentation with photographs showing manholes, storage tanks, treatment plants and storm drains.

Asking and responding to questions, he talked about how water moves naturally and through the municipal system. The children learned about watersheds, runoff and precipitation, as well as the difference between storm sewers, which simply funnel fluids to large bodies of water,

# Lesson

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and wastewater, which is treated.

According to Bernheimer, only 3 percent of the Earth's water is drinkable. He said two-thirds of the clean water is frozen, leaving only 1 percent naturally fresh. The rest requires treatment before it can be ingested safely.

In addition to drinking water, the presentation emphasized how the fluid is used in cooking, cleaning and bathing.

"We want the students to understand pollution," he said.

Bernheimer said the township can use up to 10 million gallons of water daily. The local wastewater treatment plant processes about 6 million gallons a day that are returned to the natural environment.