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## Hatherly teaches sun safety while raising funds for shade structure

Two tall oak trees used to cast long shadows over Hatherly Elementary's upper wing playground.

But disease and storm damage forced the town's public works crews to knock the old oak trees down, limiting the shaded areas for kids on sunny days.

Now Katie Labadia, a parent of two Hatherly students, is working to raise money to install at least one shade structure on the playground and in the mean time, she hopes to teach the school's students about sun safety as well.

She worked with the school to invite Maryellen Maguire-Eisen, executive director of the Norwell-based Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, to talk to the students the day before National Fry Day.

A national initiative, Gov. Charlie Baker also proclaimed Don't Fry Day for May 27 to raise awareness among Massachusetts residents.

More than five million new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed annually in the United States, said Maguire-Eisen, who is also an oncology and dermatology nurse.

Maguire-Eisen said children face a growing risk of getting melanoma, pointing to research indicating 72 percent of melanomas in children occur in girls between the ages of 15 and 19.

The Norwell foundation recently worked with the State House to change the laws regarding minors from using tanning beds.

The foundation visited 50 different schools in May to make children "SunAWARE," which reminds them to Avoid unprotected exposure, Wear protective clothing, Apply broad spectrum sunscreen, Routinely examine your body for changes to the skin, and Educate your family and community.

"The more you do, the more you raise awareness," she said. "It's about planting a seed with the kids."

At Hatherly, Maguire-Eisen stunned students and adults alike when she instructed them to lather up in 1 ounce of sunscreen every two hours to avoid sunburn.

"I learned more about how to take care of my skin and how much to put on," Valentine McNeilly, 12, said. "I thought it was surprising you had to put on whole ounce."

She encouraged using at least 30 SPF, and explained there's a bit of a math lesson in exposure—the less they use, the lower the SPF's value; the more powerful the sun's rays, the faster the sunscreen wears off.

"I've watched people put on sunscreen and try dab and dab," she told the students, mocking putting some on her face here and some there. "No! Sunscreen supposed to be slathered on."

Emily MacMillian, 9, learned a lot from the discussion, which covered a range of information from the types of sunscreen to why freckles are easier to get on our noses (Sun is strongest when it's directly above us).

"It was fascinating," she said. "Everything."

Gridska Flynn, 11, said she found the sun safety talk to be helpful.

"Now I'll be able to make sure I won't get burned or worse," she said.

Lydon O'Brien, 9, learned sunglasses are necessary to protect the eyes from sunburns.

Michael Dockray, 10, said he learned a lot, too.

"I like how they explained the different sunscreens and how much to put on and how sprays aren't really good. I thought sprays and bottles were about the same," he said.

Maguire-Eisen told the students while sprays are a quick option, they don't always offer the fullest coverage, in part because it can't be clear how much is used in one application.

She encouraged the students to take the lessons they learned home with them so their family members can protect themselves, too.



Students eagerly raise their hands to answer questions about sunscreen. Gary Higgins/The Patriot Ledger

Her message stuck with students.

Principal Mari-An Fitzmaurice said a parent called her the next day in gratitude because her child stopped fighting the idea of lathering up and volunteered wear sunscreen.

The students also crowded a special school store planned on Don't Fry Day.

The store sold a variety of sun safety products, including sunglasses, UV bracelets that change color as a reminder to reapply, sunscreen and UV Hatherly Shirts. It was such a success—the bracelets sold out and other items were depleted—that another special sale is planned for this week's final school store, Labadia said.

The proceeds from the sales will go toward the playground shade structure. She hopes to keep raising money and have something installed next school year.

*Follow editor Kristi Funderbark on Twitter @kfunder*

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