

Collecting for a cause

By Kathryn Koch **Old Colony Memorial** Tue
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PLYMOUTH - The task of counting more than 3,000 books in four days and each day preparing an Excel spread sheet recording the number of books the Plymouth South Middle School seventh-graders collected floor-by-floor was all for a good cause.

The original goal set by Principal John Siever was to collect 1,000 books for Teen LEEP (Leadership Employment Enrichment Program), a nonprofit group offering educational and employment services to disadvantaged and disabled young people, including jobs at the More than Words bookstore in Waltham. Seventh-grader Tim West, a student in the school's Helping Others While Learning, or HOWL, said he was definitely surprised by how many books they had collected in just four days.

"We've been collecting books from all over the school for Project LEEP," he said. "Each floor has about a thousand, and we're only a week into it."

Siever, whose daughter's college roommate told him about the program, said the retail store is essentially a classroom. The young people learn about in-store as well as online sales. "They learn how to run a business and take charge of their lives," he said. "I thought it was a good project and that we could help them out. I think it's a good thing to have the school community contribute to charity."

The HOWL students are collecting books until Nov. 18, but they are also responsible for the school's expanded yearlong recycling program. This year, in addition to paper, the students are collecting plastic bottles to recycle. They started collecting the bottles Nov. 6.

HOWL teacher Warren Phillips said the students themselves made the decision to recycle plastic bottles in addition to paper. "It was their decision, and it was wonderful," he said. "It's a lot of effort, but it's worth it." Seventh-grader Keri Mackey said she thinks about all the bottles they take from the snack cart alone. "We use a lot of plastic in this school," she said.

The students created a brochure on plastic recycling that they circulated around the school with facts on why people should recycle, what the numbers on plastics mean and what the different numbered plastics



be used for. Mackey said one interesting fact in particular that she learned stands out in her mind.

"When we recycle we also save oil," she said.

Seventh-grader Ally Booth said the seven different numbers on plastics cover many different kinds of plastics. "We can take almost any plastic," she said. "The more you recycle, the better."

Phillips said the students in the HOWL program have different strengths, whether working on a spreadsheet or getting organized, but in collaboration are able to accomplish a great deal. "It's about using your abilities," he said. "It doesn't matter how smart they are; what matters is how they're using their smarts."

