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## Tri-County's Primary Days teaches children respect for earth and themselves

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WOOSTER -- Reduce, recycle, reuse.

Fine Arts Consultant Gary DeVault used the phrase that could have been the mantra of Tri-County Educational Service Center's Primary Day Enrichment Academy -- a program designed for younger students right before they return to school. It led to corollary themes, such as Pollution Patrol and Bash the Trash.

But recent participants in the program did more than try to monitor or destroy trash. They turned it into something completely new.

In retired Chippewa district instructor Sallie Morton's class, plastic pop bottles taken apart and rebuilt in new configurations became maracas and flower pots. Cylindrical oatmeal boxes turned into drums.

"We're singing recycling songs," Morton said, enthused because students could accompany the songs on their newly created instruments.

Lori Ebert, a teacher in Green Local Schools, coached children on related creative writing.

All Primary Day instructors came up with a program to fit the theme, coordinator Diane Pool, also a Tri-County ESC instructor, said.

Hillsdale teacher Danyel O'Hail truly knew the ropes of Primary Day, having participated in it as a young Triway student and then helped with the program as a high school aide when she was older.

Now a teacher herself, O'Hail "came back and is teaching for me," Pool said.

Re-using bottles, "We're making volcanoes erupt," O'Hail said.

"I try to tie in reading," she said, a point highlighted by a reading station and books propped up across the chalk rail.

Led by O'Hail on a virtual journey, "We're traveling all around where these volcanoes and creatures are," Pool said.

In veteran Primary Day teacher Fred del Guidice's art class, participants could choose their medium from markers, crayons, colored pencils, pastels and "probably more (choices) than (ever before)."

Del Guidice's students learned not to waste and were guided not only in respect for the environment, but for each other as well, "at home, here, and everywhere else," del Guidice said.

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Although Primary Day is in its 20th year, Pool said, it remains "fresh and alive," and it "gets the kids excited about learning."

More than 200 first- and second-grade students participated in the program, which covered five different curricular areas and was held on the campus of The College of Wooster.

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