

FUN WITH ENERGY



Messenger photos by John Halley

Gabby Carey and Lucien Lent, Morrison Elementary fourth-graders, complete a circuit using potatoes Tuesday at Kids Energy Days at Ohio University.

Kids learn beans can help save planet

That lesson and others part of Energy Days at OU

By DANALINE BRYANT
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Some younger-than-usual students attended lectures Tuesday on the Ohio University campus.

Big yellow school buses pulled up to OU's Baker Center early in the morning, transporting Athens City Schools third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders to the first of two "Kids Energy Days."

The event has been held annually for five years. It's sponsored by the OU Office of Sustainability and includes on lessons in

energy, conservation and the environment.

Students rotated through stations set up in the Baker Center Ballroom. Organizers said lessons were designed for students in each grade level in attendance. Some lessons were designed to meet state curriculum requirements, while others were created as enrichment lessons. Each station was staffed by a professional in the energy field,
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Morrison Elementary fourth-grader Zachery Roggenbuck shows he has enough pedal-power to turn on light bulbs.



How beans can help save planet and other lessons

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by an OU middle childhood education major or college students majoring in science.

Lined up against the walls were bag after bag of popcorn and apples, destined to become mid-morning snacks for the young learners.

Themes for the exhibits and presentations included static electricity, biofuel, worm composition and more.

In one area, three presenters kept groups of children entertained with humorous but fact-filled lessons on the Tesla coil and VanDerGraf static electricity generator. Frequently, excited exclamations of "Cool," "Awesome," and "Wow!" could be heard as children watched the presentations.

Jason Newsome, an Ohio State University student majoring in education, was one of the static electricity presenters.

"They really like this," he said. "Everybody wants to put their hands on (the VanDerGraf generator). They get very excited and are asking a lot of questions. They're having a good time."

When Newsome asked for volunteers to assist him, hands shot in the air. West Elementary fourth-grader Selinde Roosenburg, 9, was one of the students selected to help with a demonstration on the Tesla coil. Afterwards, she described the experience.

"It felt really cool — sort of like somebody poking me," she said.

Makena Bentley, 9, also a West fourth-grader, assisted Newsome in a demonstration on the build-up of static electricity when a balloon is rubbed on someone's head. Makena giggled as her hair, reacting to the friction of the balloon, stood out a little from her head.

"It felt very fuzzy and weird," she said later. "I'm having fun. I like being able to interact with the stuff here."

At the end of the lesson, students lined up for a turn at placing their hands on the VanDerGraf generator. As each child took a turn, he or she was charged with static electricity. For some, the generator caused their hair to rise. All seemed to

enjoy the, literal, hands-on experience.

"Don't touch me! You'll get me shocked!" said 9-year-old John Melfi, a fourth-grader at West. Laughing as he walked away from the VanDerGraf, he offered an assessment.

"You could kind of feel the static electricity going in your hand," he said. "If anyone touched your hand or part of your body, you could feel the static electricity in your leg and you could feel your hair going up."

Lester Gulledge, an Americorps volunteer serving with Community Food Initiatives, presented a lesson on different types of beans.

"I'm teaching them how their food choices relate to energy use," he said. "I'm teaching them what replacing one or two meals with beans instead of meat can mean to fossil fuel (consumption) and telling them how much energy and land it takes to put a steak on the table rather than beans."

"Beans have energy — we learned all about it," said Nikki Stobart, 9, a fourth-grader from The Plains Elementary. "This is fun."

Area resident Matt Peters, who owns a worm farm and sells the compost the worms create, has been an Energy Days presenter for four years. He said he always asks the students where dirt comes from.

"They always say, 'the ground,'" Peters said, laughing as he recounted the way he begins his lessons on worm composting.

Hailey Paumier, an OU junior majoring in middle childhood education, gave a demonstration on how bikes, light bulbs and clocks can be powered by the energy stored in people's bodies or in fruits and vegetables.

While the students learned many energy lessons on Tuesday, they weren't the only ones learning. Many of the presenters were middle childhood education majors who gained experience in their future careers by participating in Energy Days.

"This is the age I want to teach," Paumier said. "Today I had fourth-graders, and that was really nice. They really liked the demonstrations."

The event resumes today.