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Maryland Community News

Published: Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Travilah Elementary in the running for the green *by [Lindsay A. Powers](#) Staff writer*

At Travilah Elementary School in Potomac, green is the word.

Travilah is one of two schools the Maryland State Department of Education nominated for the U.S. Department of Education's 2014 Green Ribbon Schools award.

The award is given to schools that take part in environmentally friendly practices and teach students about the environment — which are found in abundance at Travilah.

"It makes us feel really proud that we're on the right track and we're excited to be recognized for the hard work we've done," Principal Susan Shenk said.

Shenk said one of the biggest green practices at the school involves collecting its foamed plastic lunch trays and giving them to Whole Foods so they can be recycled.

Travilah students also collect recyclables throughout the school as part of the School Energy and Recycling Team program, which has helped increase the amount of paper, bottles and cans the school recycles, she said.

The school has also decreased the amount of trash it generates in part through its "Trash Free Fridays," Shenk said.

Kids try to bring in lunches that don't produce any trash, she said.

Travilah also composts items like fruits, vegetables and breads, which it uses for its six organic gardens.

Those gardens have involved the help of Whole Foods as well as the Potomac Horse Center.

"We've really tried to use the community to help us with this," Shenk said.

Other efforts center around helping kids be active and healthy. One program called "Travilah Trekkers" closes off the school's bus circle so that students can run around it during recess.

"It gets a lot of energy off," Shenk said. "It's not about speed, it's just about doing it."

Fourth-grade teacher Carol Knoblach, who has helped lead the school's green efforts, said the school aims to teach its students a broad range of environmental topics, including the affect of farming on the Chesapeake Bay, wind and solar energy and where their food comes from.

"I really feel that children learn by doing and seeing and witnessing good things," Knoblach said.

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