

On Earth Day, students monitored stream health

United Friends students checked Quakertown Creek

Heather DiSario

United Friends School middle school students spent this year's Earth Day in Quakertown's Memorial Park monitoring the water in the Quakertown Creek.

The creek is a section of the Licking Run Creek and it runs in the back of the park behind the skate shed to 9th Street along Mill Road. Students from the nearby school who regularly visit the park observed large amounts of trash and leeches in the stream and decided to do something about it.

The school received a grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection for the purchase of stream monitoring equipment. The testing, which students have joined for the last two years, is done with digital probes and chemicals tests, which for the past two years students have helped take part in.

Chemical test results have come back in a normal range, but the majority of the organisms found in the creek have been leeches and other pollutant tolerant organisms.

Middle school science and math teacher Kathy Leber explained that organisms such as mayflies and water pennies cannot tolerate pollution.

"We're looking to see what organisms are established in the stream," said Leber. "What we find is a good indication of the water quality."

Earlier in the day, Leber and her students distributed flyers to neighbors of the creek, explaining what the students are doing, and the dos and don'ts of living next to a stream such as keeping a riparian buffer intact along the bank.

Riparian buffers can be strips of grass, ferns, trees or shrubs. These buffers help keep pollutants out by filtering runoff and debris while providing a habitat for wildlife. Leber noted that grass clippings, raked leaves and other yard waste dumped into the creek or along the stream bank rob dissolved oxygen



United Friends School science and math teacher Kathy Leber shows students what to look for in the creek.



Lauren Mann, Emily Goff, Alexis Maury and Anna Esposito are among the monitors.

from the water while adding sediment. Gilled animals need dissolved oxygen to survive and the

sediment clogs up their gills. Planting native species along the creek, cleaning up trash and



Andrew Niemynski and Daxen Reed search for organisms.

installing nest boxes and feeders is encouraged.

United Friends School is work-



Haley Salmon checks a rock for organisms.



Caden Hall holds a crawfish he found in the creek.

ing with the Upper Tohickon Watershed Association and the Bucks County Conservation District.

The section of Licking Creek is part of the Tohickon Creek Watershed. The goal of the school project is to raise awareness of the importance of keeping this stream and others healthy.

"Every part of our water system counts," said Leber.