

JENNIFER WILHELM: LEARNING GREEN BY LIVING GREEN

When Jennifer Wilhelm describes her role as PEA's new environmental education fellow as "a dream job," she isn't exaggerating. "I thought I was going to have to create this kind of position for myself," she says, "because it exists in so few places."

Wilhelm became interested in campus sustainability issues while majoring in environmental studies at Green Mountain College, an environmental liberal arts college in Vermont, and decided to work at the high-school level during grad school at UNH. "There was a lot of focus on environmental education in colleges and universities," she notes (UNH, for example, has its own Office of Sustainability), as well as programs for elementary and middle schools. What was missing, she felt, were programs for secondary-school students. "A lot of high schools don't make environmental concerns a priority," she explains, even though it's a crucial period in which to educate young adults not only about larger environmental issues, but also the impact of their own behaviors. Exeter, she says, is well ahead of many other schools in this regard—not just because it offered her the job of her dreams, but because it has an institutional commitment to sustainability that spans students and staff, faculty and trustees. Since starting work in September, Wilhelm says she has been "impressed by how high the level of awareness already is."

Raising that awareness still higher is Wilhelm's goal for the 2005–06 school year. Together with PEA's Environmental Task Force, she has introduced several new initiatives, including a dorm composting program, an ambitious food-waste audit in the dining halls, and, coming up later this winter, a month-long interscholastic electricity conservation competition with Lawrenceville and Northfield Mt. Hermon. "They're all deliberately 'visible' programs," she explains, "that cause people to think about their own practices." And, occasionally, to grumble. "There was definitely some initial skepticism about the composting, concerns about odors and pests," she admits. "But most people are open to trying new things, and the program has been going very well."

Her fundamental goal, Wilhelm says, isn't simply to open Exonians' eyes to glories of composting, but to help create a cultural change. "When people first come to Exeter," she says, "we're told that when crossing the public streets on campus, we should make a point of smiling and waving at the drivers who've stopped to let us pass. After a while, we don't think about it anymore. It's just 'what we do at Exeter.' I'd like us to be the same way about our environmental practices."



As Exeter's environmental education fellow, Jennifer Wilhelm (left) has introduced a new dorm composting program. Twice a week, Wilhelm and Danele Smith (right) of the facilities management department collect compost from participating dorms.

BETH BRONNAN



AN APPLE FROM THE TEACHER: CHARLIE PRATT '52 HELPS SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DINING AT PEA

Over the years, Charlie Pratt '52 has had many different roles at Exeter: student, faculty member, director of the Bennett Fellow Program. This year, he's added yet another role to that list: official apple vendor for the Academy.

Together with his wife, Joan, Pratt runs Apple Annie, a 200-tree apple orchard that adjoins their Brentwood home. While the Pratts have been supplying the principal's office with apples for a number of years, last fall they saw their order increase substantially as part of the school's Sustainable Dining Project. Director of Dining Services David Davidson has made a commitment to buying more organic and local foods, including 14 percent of Apple Annie's annual harvest.

The Pratts' "low-spray" style of raising apples has earned them loyal customers from around the region. Running the orchard "is a wonderful thing," Charlie Pratt says, "And it's good for the region, because our area needs agriculture to maintain its characteristic landscape. And everybody needs local agriculture, because it's good food."

The Pratts also were recently noted for their work with local land conservation. At its 2005 annual meeting, the Rockingham Land Trust awarded the couple the Jack Heath Conservation Award, established in honor of the emeritus PEA faculty member and founder of the trust. The award recognizes the Pratts' community leadership and enduring support of conservation in greater Rockingham County.



Educator and orchard-owner Charlie Pratt held an apple-tasting event at Elm Street Dining Hall last fall.

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