

Video: Earth Day comes early for Loudoun middle schoolers

Friday April 15th by Matt Vecchio

Picking up trash, planting trees and learning about rehabilitated wildlife? Sure beats sitting in class.

The group, comprised of sixth and seventh graders from Belmont Ridge Middle School, spent the morning of April 15 out of school and getting dirty—opting to fish trash out of streams and fertilize baby trees near the neighboring National Conference Center rather than sit in class.

“This is our fifth consecutive year having Earth Day here at the National Conference Center,” Sharon Meyers, an employee of the center, said. “We love being part of it and helping the environment.”

The students in attendance were members of the middle school’s ecology class—which focuses on teaching students to leave a greener footprint in their lives.

Additionally, the club also got the chance to see a trio of animals that had been injured and rehabilitated—including a possum and an owl—and then witnessed Belinda Burwell, director and veterinarian at the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, release a red-tailed hawk back into the wild. The hawk had been hit by a car and nursed back to health.

Earth Day is officially recognized on April 22, but Belmont Ridge Middle and the National Conference Center decided to hold festivities a week early to give the students—who will be out on Spring Break next week—the chance to participate.

[YouTube Video]: <http://www.youtube.com/user/loudountimesdotcom>





Joel Mateo, 11, shovels soil onto a newly planted tree with his Belmont Ridge Middle School classmates during an educational event at the National Conference Center April 15 celebrating Earth Day a week early. Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Beverly Denny



Belinda Lee Burwell, Director of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, prepares to release a rehabilitated red-tailed hawk back into the wild in front of a Belmont Ridge Middle School ecology class at the National Conference Center April 15 as part of an early celebration of Earth Day. The wildlife center doesn't name and limits handling of wildlife that are able to recover so that they will continue to keep their distance from humans. Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Beverly Denny



Connor Hite, 11, waits to shovel soil around a newly planted tree with his ecology class of Belmont Ridge Middle School as part of a National Conference Center event April 15 celebrating Earth Day early. Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Beverly Denny



Belinda Lee Burwell, Director of the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, shows an eastern screech owl named Shrek to students in an ecology class at Belmont Ridge Middle School as part of an Earth Day event April 15 at the National Conference Center. Shrek was hit by a car two years ago and is now mostly blind so he cannot be released back into the wild. Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Beverly Denny



Sydney Sawyer, 12, grabs a piece of trash from a classmate of her Belmont Ridge Middle School ecology class as they walked through the woods to the National Conference Center for an Earth Day event April 15. After the 6th and 7th graders collected trash, they were shown rehabilitated wildlife and witnessed the release of a red-tailed hawk. Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Beverly Denny

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