

Middle school students respond to global warming presentations.

By Laurie Veenendaal

Lakeview Lutheran Church recently hosted two speakers on the increasingly urgent issue of global warming. In February, Todd Schaack, an atmospheric scientist at UW Madison, spoke during the adult education hour about research currently being done at the university, and projections for the future if current trends remain unchanged. Also in February, Hannah Hill, an intern with the Sierra Club, spoke about her group's efforts at educating the public about what people can do to stop contributing to the problem, and at best, begin to work together to reduce levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Schaack explained that global climate is an extremely complex problem involving some factors scientists still know little about. One of those, surprisingly, is the behavior of clouds. Accurate climate records have been kept only for a short time, but using core samples from the Arctic and Antarctic ice shelves can tell scientists about how much CO₂ was in the atmosphere for periods of thousands of years.

Some were surprised to learn that greenhouse gases are necessary for humans to survive on earth. However the dramatic rise in greenhouse gases trapped in the atmosphere in the last 150 years is "almost certainly" caused by human activity, for example the growth of industry and the use of cars.

When asked, "What do we do now?" students responded:

- Stop polluting!
- Step up research to develop alternative energy sources.
- Everyone do something now and keep the change going.
- Clean up the mess humans have made.

When asked, "What worried them the most?" they cited:

- "We have been overwhelming the earth's balance for 150 years.
- "No one knows how quickly changes need to be made!
- We may be losing our planet.
- "My kids and grandkids won't be able

to live and grow old.

- My kids and grandkids will never see a polar bear."

They did, however, also have hope. One student noted, "We CAN stop this now. We have a problem, but we can still do something about it," and "We could see a positive change in 30 years if we start now."

When asked how concerned he personally was about this issue, Schaack admitted, "Before I began studying it, I really thought some reports were exaggerated and alarmist. After flying over some of America's coastal regions, I now have a different opinion. It is a complex issue with no easy answers."

She focused on what people can DO to reduce global warming, the history of global warming and what we can do to make the future safer and more hopeful for generations to come.

When asked if students thought they could make a difference as individuals, responses were mixed. Some said, "Yes, because everyone can change something and try to influence others to change, too." Most agreed that no one could do it alone, and that "change is hard because we are used to the way things are" Others thought that individuals could not make much difference because "the world is a big place with six billion people." Others commented, "Individuals changing won't bring the big change we need." Some think that there are simply people who are satisfied with the way things are and don't want to change.

However, according to Hill, making what many consider very small changes can make a huge difference. Two congregation members, representing both MG&E and Wisconsin Power and Light, both agreed that using energy efficient appliances, light bulbs and doing whatever is possible to conserve both electricity and water can indeed make a huge difference in our personal and collective "carbon footprint."

As the Asian proverb reminds us, "The journey of a 1,000 miles begins with a single step." Global warming is a complex issue with a complex history and an uncertain future, but we can each take our "single steps" and bend our ways "in the direction of hope."

Cherokee Marsh declared a wetland gem

By Jan Axelson

It's official: Cherokee Marsh is a wetland gem. On May 18, on a knoll overlooking Cherokee Marsh near the School Road boat landing, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) presented the news to a gathering of wetland enthusiasts, conservation professionals, and elected officials.

The occasion was the rollout of the Wisconsin Wetland Gems, a list of 100 high quality wetlands statewide. The WWA compiled the list to celebrate the state's diverse wetlands, including Cherokee Marsh.

The WWA's Becky Abel reminded those present that wetlands have many functions, including providing homes for fish and other wildlife, reducing flooding, improving water quality, connecting to ground water, protecting shorelines, and offering recreation. Department of Natural Resources Secretary Matt Frank stated that Wisconsin's wetlands helped minimize flood damage after last year's heavy rains. Topf Wells, Chief of Staff to Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, affirmed the County's commitment to preserving and restoring wetlands in the Lake Mendota watershed.

The occasion also included a reunion of former Madison School District teachers, administrators, and natural-

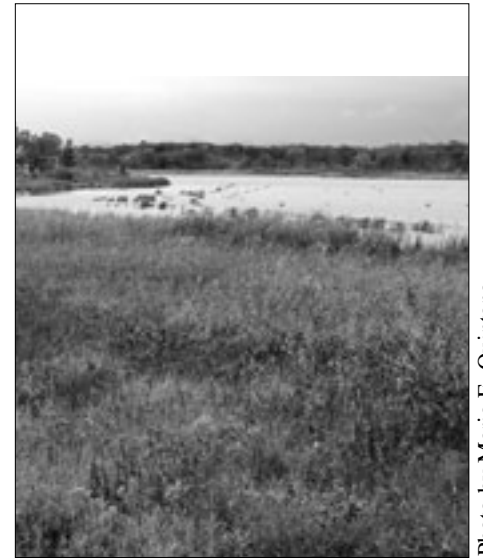


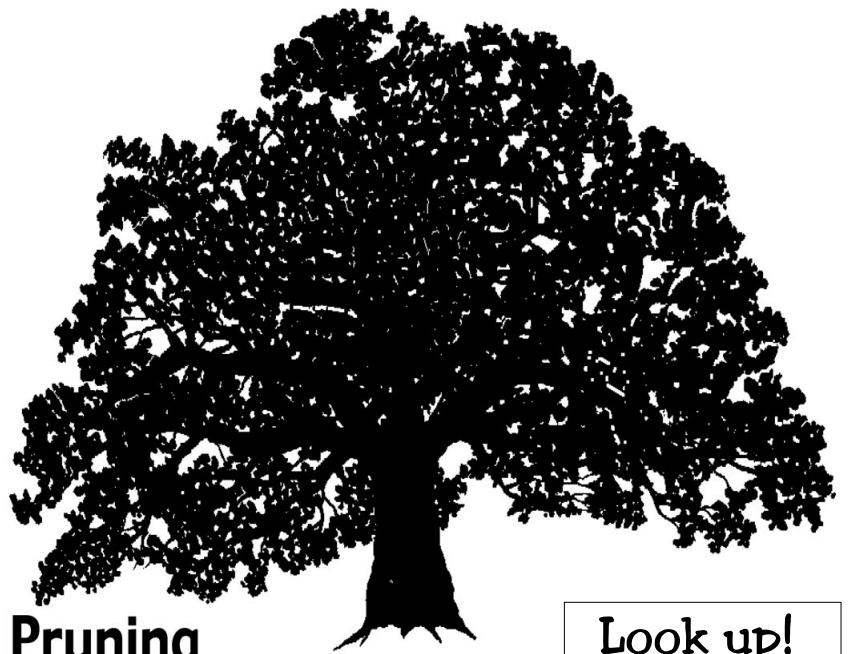
Photo by Mario E. Quintana

Cherokee Marsh shows its beauty in every season

ists who led or were involved with summer programs and field trips in the marsh since 1971. Some of the students, such as Middleton's Public Lands Manager Penni Klein, have gone on to careers in environmental fields. Concluding the event were tours on foot and in replica Voyageur canoes on loan from the Department of Natural Resources.

For more news about events in and around Cherokee Marsh, visit www.CherokeeMarsh.org.

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