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New water machine at Spaulding High will save green — and blue

ROCHESTER — When Spaulding High School science teacher Jerry Lachance went to a green conference in Boston at the end of August, he found out about a water machine that might just help the school reduce its carbon footprint.



Taking the idea of this machine to his honors environmental science class, they decided to make it a reality at the school and after a semester-long effort, the machine was installed Dec. 22 right outside the cafeteria.

The water machine, created by Pura Vida H2O out of Massachusetts, will allow students to fill up a water bottle or canteen at around 25 to 50 cents for a 16- to 24-ounce serving of cold, purified water. The honors class hopes that the machine will reduce the consumption of plastic bottles at the school. Lachance said that there are approximately seven to 10 large recycling bins of plastic recyclables taken from the school every day.

"There is no other machine like this in a school in New Hampshire," Lachance said.

The machine was installed free of cost with the company receiving a percentage of the profits. The rest of the money made will go back to the students and be put into a student activity account.

The machine will be installed with a 90-day trial run and, if it is successful, will remain. Lachance said that the company is looking at eight servings an hour being a good success rate.

"If it all works out maybe we'll get a second one," he said with a smile.

All maintenance, including weekly filter changes, will be taken care of by Lachance's honors class.

The class has been working on the project since September and say they are excited to see it become a reality. Many didn't realize all the effort it took to get

something like it in the school.

"It's a long process," senior Andrew Bosco said. "It wasn't as easy as someone just putting it together."

This process included creating a contract and marketing, and many of Lachance's students were amazed to find they had to involve a district lawyer to make sure everything was done properly.

The students even put together a survey to find out whether the machine would be useful at the school. The survey, produced in late October, was sent to the entire student body and received responses from a third of the population. From it, students learned that only around 7 percent of the students at Spaulding use the water fountains and that of the kids who purchase water from vending machines, 51 percent do not reuse the bottle.

"That just puts that many more bottles in recycling," senior Shannon Douglas said.

In addition, the students also found out that the water machine will actually conserve water. Senior Lincoln Date explained that it takes seven times as much water to make a plastic bottle than what is actually in it. Since the machine refills canteens and water bottles, it eliminates the need to create more plastic bottles.

It also saves more water than a water fountain. When taking a drink, not all the water goes into the person's mouth and many people just leave the water running. With the machine, there is a spigot so the water is poured directly into the bottle with no excess water being wasted.

Lachance said the most challenging task for his class now is to convince the rest of the student body to use the machine. The class is working with the school store to sell 100 canteens donated by Pura Vida H2O. The canteens will be sold for around \$5 each and Douglas said they are working to have them personalized.

In addition, Lachance said they're marketing the machine as a New Year's resolution, giving students the chance to make their lives more eco-friendly, but the students in his class don't seem to think convincing students to use the machine will be a problem.

Douglas said she has had many students come up to her and ask her about the bulletin board advertising the machine.

"When I explain they think it's cool," she said. "... A lot of kids are really excited about going green."

Senior Mary Nelson said she has been receiving similar responses.

"A lot of people said they'd rather (use the machine) than drink from a plastic bottle," she said.

Even Principal Rob Seaward said he is eager to use the machine.

"The water is pure if not purer than the bottled water," he said. "I personally would feel better getting clean water from the machine than the water fountain. From the plant to the school it has to go through lots of pipes. I would always wonder what's in whatever I'm drinking."

The students are now patiently waiting to see whether all their hard work will pay off.

"We had to wait a long time and now it's right around the corner and we can use the machine," Nelson said. "It's exciting. A lot of work, but worth it in the end."
