



Students on Tuesday learned about how the everyday decisions they make can affect their local creeks, streams, rivers and lakes as well as the watersheds where other people live. More than 80 students from Klein and Villa Maria elementary schools, Fort LeBoeuf Middle School and the House of Mercy after-school program participated in an Environment Erie Youth Training Day at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center.

"I hope to educate them on what they can do at home and at school to help improve our waterways and our water quality," said Nate Millet, Environment Erie education director.

He said anyone can reduce the amount of water he or she uses by taking shorter showers.

Augustine Fisher, a Villa sixth-grader, said a problem he learned about is people throwing garbage in parking lots. That trash can get into waterways.

"You shouldn't litter," said Fisher, 11.

He began the day with a group of students in the stream simulations session led by Kristen Currier, an environmental educator from the Erie County Conservation District.

Currier had a "stream table," a river process simulator with crushed plastic for sediment and flowing water that allowed students to shape their own stream and solve problems like how to keep horse urine from entering the water. The students' solution was to move the animals

farther from the waterway.

Villa science teacher Mary Wright said the Youth Training Day allowed students to leave their classrooms and use equipment like the simulator. She said the day also helped students learn how their actions affect the environment.

"I don't think they realize they have an impact on the whole world," she said.

In a session on watersheds, presenter Matt Pluta, Environment Erie's program director, told students that he lives in Edinboro and that the rain that falls on his roof goes into Edinboro Lake. From there it travels to French Creek, the Allegheny River and eventually on to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico.

Gasoline, soda pop or other materials dumped on a driveway could have an effect not only on water here but also on the water of people who live downstream, presenters said.

"What we do affects everyone around us," Pluta told students.