

Students learn where their garbage goes

By Kathryn Reed

Looking at the pile of trash, the students pointed to the toilet in the middle of the heap.

Walking through the South Tahoe Refuse yard they came upon oil drums, cans of paint that were separated out, a chair that looked useable if a few repairs were made, and a snowblower.



Jeanne Lear gives students a tour of South Tahoe Refuse on Oct. 30.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

These nine students from Whittell High and Zephyr Cove elementary schools got an education in garbage on Friday at the South Lake Tahoe facility that is responsible for disposing of their weekly trash.

Normally it's Whittell students who participate in the Enrichment Fridays, but all schools were out of school in honor of Nevada Day so some of the younger students came along.

Enrichment Fridays are the result of parents wanting to give students at WHS something to do other than hang out at home now that the 7-12 school is off on Fridays.

Mostly it's seventh- and eighth-graders who participate in the monthly outings because 80 percent of students in grades 9-12 are in sports. It was the athletes missing school that led to the creation of the four-day school week that started this semester.

The idea is to have the event be educational and fun " like a school field trip. Parents are working with businesses to make it work for everyone and not cost much.

Sept. 25 was the first Enrichment Friday. It designed to show students what public transportation is all about, including how to bring a bike on a bus.

That theme was carried over to this month when the students and adults took BlueGo from Kahle Community Park in Stateline to Third Street in South Tahoe. Then they walked the block or so to South Tahoe Refuse.

Even though lunch at a garbage company might seem odd, the students didn't think twice about diving into the pizza boxes " freshly ordered for them.

A short video about the operation of the 40-plus-year-old operation explained how things work.

Afterward, John Marchini, whose family started the operation, explained that the plant is recycling about 49 percent of the garbage it collects, with that number sometimes hitting 54 percent.

Even with the blue bag recycling program that started this year, he said employees working the assembly line still sort out a ton of recyclables.

Jeanne Lear with STR told the students the 250 tons of garbage

the company collects each day could fill their multipurpose room.

“Think about what you are putting in the garbage bag and if you needed it in the first place,” Lear said to the students.

She showed them how packaging is wasteful, buying in bulk is good, and that buying goods made with recyclable material is the best.

Tori Jimenez, a Whittell eighth-grader, said she liked learning that there are little things she can do to protect the environment.

The next Enrichment Friday is Nov. 20 “Tibetan Day. Dec. 4 will be at MontBleu for the Festival of Trees and Lights.