

Holy Spirit's pedal power gives Earth Day a shot in the arm



By Brock Weir

Students across Aurora have been enthusiastically promoting healthy ways for kids to get to and from school on their own power, but Holy Spirit Catholic School took things to a new level last week.

Earth Day was marked last Wednesday, but Holy Spirit saved the best of the celebrations for last, culminating in a student assembly and concert on Friday morning.

The twist? The event was powered entirely by students as teams took turns generating electricity on two stationary bikes in "Rock the Bike."

Through their combined efforts, they generated enough electricity to light the gym, along with microphones and musical instruments to get the party started.

"Today, we gather to celebrate our Earth and all of its wonders," said students. "We are provided with food, shelter, water, space and beauty. God put this world together out of a variety of elements. God, our creator, we ask you in your special way to teach us how to love and preserve our Mother Earth. This is one of your greatest gifts to us. We offer the Earth only peace and love."

If students are looking for tips on how to "love and preserve Mother Earth", teachers have ensured they already have a head start on that front. Their Green Team runs throughout the year, spanning all grades, spearheading a number of environmental projects within the school. Such programs include collecting milk bags, which are then sent to Nicaragua and Haiti where they are knitted and transformed into useful products.

The team also collects Kool-Aid Jammers, which are sent off for recycling into a variety of different products.

Batteries are collected for proper disposal, waste-free lunches are encouraged, and lights are regularly kept off to conserve energy. The team is led by teachers Carolyn Kinsman and Christina Barbaro who, this year, have been focusing on making Holy Spirit one of the first in the York Catholic District School Board to earn Platinum status as an Eco School. They have been among the Gold standard for the past three school years.

During Friday's events, the audience of students, teachers, and parents were entertained by singers and musicians from intermediate grades, focusing on music with an environmental message and, afterwards, Windfall Ecology Centre was on hand to give kids the rundown on an electric car they brought on site.

?Sometimes in our everyday lives, we can forget our responsibility to care for nature,? concluded one student. ?Today, as we reflect on the marvels and wonders of God's creation, let us renew our commitment as good stewards of the Earth. At Holy Spirit, we will continue to look after the Earth God gave us. We will save energy by turning off all the lights and computers when we are not using them. We will reduce by using reusable containers and water bottles for our lunches and snacks. Guide us to act responsibly, care for the Earth you gave us, and make wise choices in our everyday lives.?