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## Wenonah Elementary School Goes 'Under the Sea'

Wenonah Community Night encourages an appreciation of waterways and marine life.

By [Shana Braff](#) | [Email the author](#) | April 2, 2012

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Children are amazed by live starfish, sea cucumbers and other marine life

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Last week, [Wenonah Elementary School](#) presented "Under the Sea" [Community Night](#), which was organized by the school's Building Leadership Team (BLT), a group made up of dedicated teachers, parents and administrators.

About 800 students, parents, faculty and members of the community gathered to experience a night devoted to a vital resource: our oceans, which provide food, water, commerce, recreation, medicine and even the air we breathe. Today, our oceans are imperiled by unprecedented threats due to an onslaught of pollution, refuse, declining fisheries and climate change.

Community Night is an annual event which focuses on a different informative theme each year about which students conduct research and create related projects, which are displayed and presented throughout the night.

Wenonah received a proclamation from State Sen. John Flanagan, to commend and congratulate the teachers and students for their hard work on the "Under the Sea" projects. The event also garnered citations from Assemb. Al Graf and Assemb. Dean Murray, for the school's commitment to research.

Christine DiPaola, Wenonah Elementary School principal, invited several related agencies for an interactive night of learning. Participating organizations included: Long Island Aquarium, the U.S. Coast Guard, Long Island Maritime Museum, Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research, New York Sea

Grant's L.I. Sound Study, [Sachem Swim Club](#), The Intrepid Museum, Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, Nature Conservancy and many more.

Dale Spencer, curator of the [Lake Ronkonkoma Historical Society](#) Museum, and author of [Lake Ronkonkoma \(Images of America\)](#), along with co-author Keith Oswald, presented a slideshow of Lake Ronkonkoma.

Every person who came to the event brought a recyclable bottle for a donation to help build what are called "bottle schools" in Guatemala.

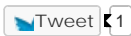
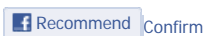
"They use bottles instead of cinderblock, and cover them with cement which provides insulation for the school. Our students heard about it and wanted to help," DiPaola said.

This effort tied into the service-oriented stance, and encouragement of community and global involvement that is at the heart of the Wenonah Elementary School ethos.

"I just want to see smiles, happy parents, and happy children. People will want to read about it [our oceans], so the night goes on," DiPaola said. "It's an incredible effort that parents put together with teachers, and with students.

"We can't do it without the collaboration. I also want to thank all the agencies and organizations for their tremendous gift of time. I always feel so in awe to see it come together."

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