

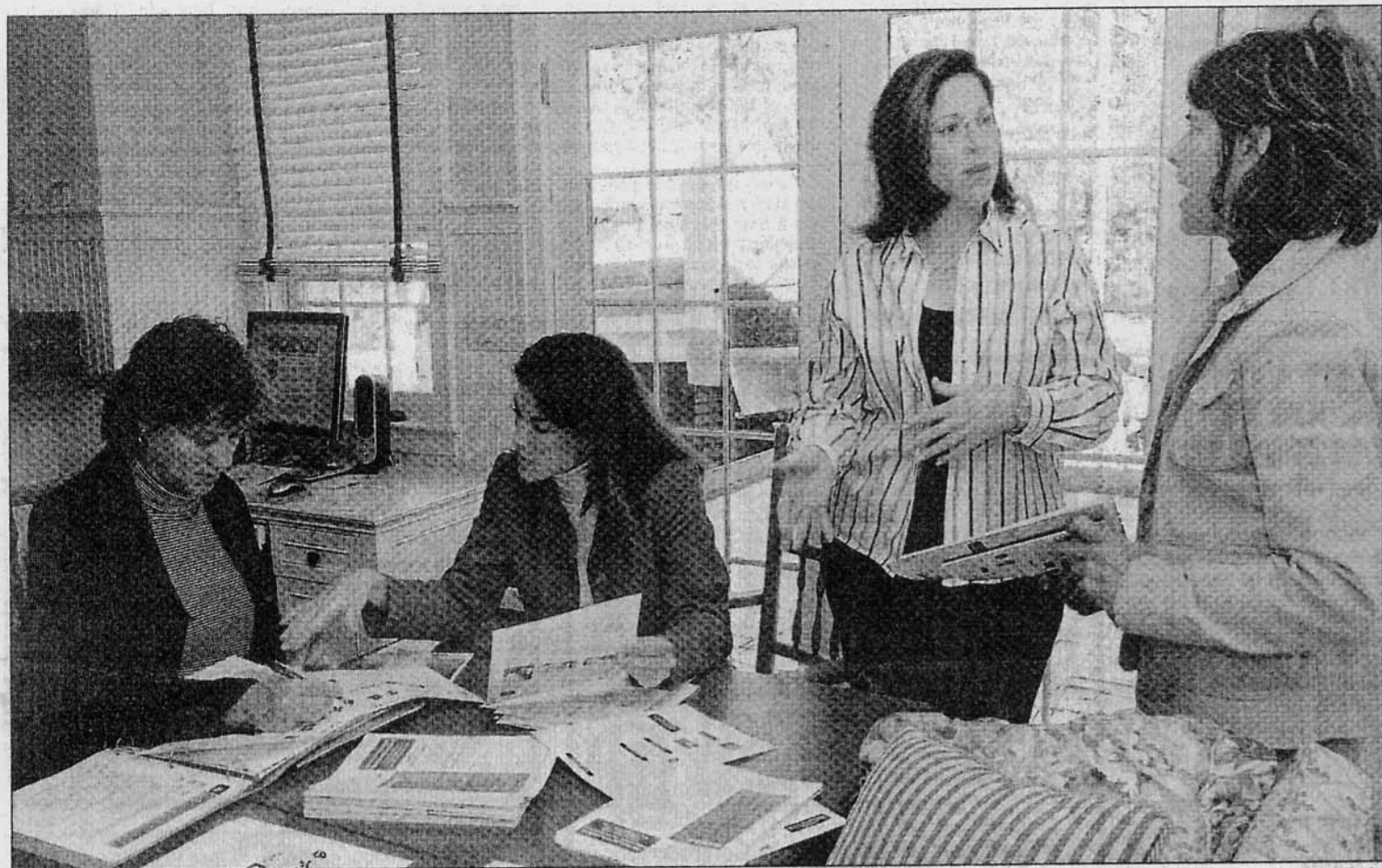
# THE PATENT TRADER

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THE ENVIRONMENT 'SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT'

## Getting kids to think about their world



Carucha L. Meuse/The Patent Trader

From left, Sher Bauer, a volunteer, Katie Ginsberg, founder of the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation, Patti Bressman, the program's coordinator, and Anne Jaffe, an environmental educator, talk in Chappaqua about the foundation's work.

### Chappaqua-based nonprofit works with schools on curricula

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The Patent Trader

What difference does it make whether you drive a gas guzzler or a hybrid, or the food you consume is grown with the help of pesticides instead of organically, or if girls in poor countries don't get an education?

These are some of the "sustain-

**It (the program) is about creating a whole new mindset for the schools, communities and corporations.**

Beth Dore, assistant principal, Increase Miller Elementary School in the Katonah-Lewisboro school district

ability" questions children and adults should think about, says Katie Ginsberg, 39, founder of Chappaqua-based Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation.

CELf, a nonprofit organization,

works with public school districts and individual teachers providing kindergarten-through-12th grade "curriculum makeovers" to pursue environmental stewardship, economic security and social equity as

complementary classroom goals.

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development defines "sustainable development" as ensuring the practice of "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

"I had two light-bulb moments," said Ginsberg, explaining the genesis of CELf.

A few years ago, when her then-8-year-old son came back from school on Earth Day, all excited that he could make a difference by conserving water, or by switching

to compact fluorescent lights, it got her thinking, she said, about how "sorely the schools were lacking in terms of environmental education."

A few months later, Ginsberg attended an OMEGA Institute conference arranged by the Putnam-Northern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services. There, she heard speakers talking about eliminating the concept of waste — making whatever is considered of no value into something of value and, as such, operating as nature does.

"That day, I committed myself

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to learning more about sustainability," Ginsberg said.

Her idea was to encourage teachers to take an existing piece of curriculum and provide a vibrant learning experience for children by using real-life examples.

A Johnny Appleseed unit in elementary school that traditionally was used to explain math concepts or different kinds of apples could be extended to teach the difference between an organic orchard and an industrial orchard.

"Explaining to the kids that if the apples were imported from other countries or came from far-away places, what might be involved as far as energy costs, pollution and ultimately nutrition," Ginsberg said.

The 4-year-old organization was recently chosen as a community partner for two Westchester County school districts, Scarsdale and Somers, to participate in an educational leadership initiative funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The \$200,000 grant was given for an initiative led by Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Mich., to provide strategic planning assistance to those two local districts and two others nationally that are using sustainability education as an approach to improving student learning.

"We are constantly engaging our students in sustainability topics, whether it is the Green Team project to improve recycling in school," said Duncan Wilson, assistant principal at Scarsdale Middle School, "or our new initiative known as the

'no idling zone,' which asks parents to turn off their ignition keys while they wait to pick up kids from school."

Organizations like CELF often serve as a central resource for school districts, strapped for time, to find ready-made material to use in classrooms, Wilson said.

"One of the challenges of running a school is that we need to make sure that everything goes smoothly, that the buses are on time and such," Wilson said. "CELF is a great resource because they save us a lot of legwork and time."

In the past two years, the foundation has undertaken several initiatives, including a CELF Summer Institute for Educators and the Students for a Sustainable Future EXPO. As it has evolved, the foundation has received grants from state Assemblyman Adam Bradley, D-White Plains, and state Sen. Suzi Oppenheimer, D-Mamaroneck, and other charitable foundations.

Ginsberg, who operates the foundation from her home office, counts among the staff three full-time volunteers and about 50 project-based volunteers. By next year, however, she plans to be financially viable enough to pay herself and the other two full-timers a "small salary."

Chappaqua resident Patti Bressman, one of the full-timers and EXPO co-chair, said the inaugural event in April brought together more than 700 students, teachers and exhibitors.

The event at Pace University's Environmental Center attracted 52 corporations, including Honda,



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Patti Bressman, right, talks about the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation at her home in Chappaqua with Anne Jaffee, an environmental educator.

Smith Barney and Whole Foods, and government agencies and non-profits. They showcased topics such as alternative energy, socially responsible investing, and organic and fair-trade agriculture.

It was great way to ignite student interest, Bressman said. Students came from Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess and Rockland counties, New York City and New Jersey.

"The response was so unexpected that we had to turn 100 students away," Bressman said. Next year, CELF plans to double the space to accommodate student field trips to the event, she said.

Beth Dore, assistant principal at Increase Miller Elementary School in the Katonah-Lewisboro school district, recently attended a symposium for administrators organized by CELF.

"It is about creating a whole new mindset for the schools, communities and corporations," Dore said.

After the EXPO, Bressman talked with her children about trading in her "pretty new" sport utility vehicle for a hybrid SUV.

"'No, we love it, mom,' they'd say," Bressman said. "But slowly with my involvement with CELF and the conversations at home, I could see it was having an impact on the way the kids were thinking."

At gas stations, the children were taking note of the amount of gas the vehicle was consuming. A few months ago, the family traded in its Toyota Land Cruiser for a Toyota Highlander.

"It was not like I was beating my kids over their heads with environmental information, but they got it," Bressman said. "And now my son, who just started driving, wants a Toyota Prius, and not a luxury car, to compete with his friends."

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