

Cedar Hill Elementary School Celebrates Eighth TREP\$ Program

By Henry M. Holden

Cedar Hill Elementary School, located in the Towaco section of Montville Township, has a mission statement that says, "Every stakeholder in our learning community unites in an effort to engage children in the joy of learning."

The school recognizes that children learn in a variety of ways, so they discuss all learning styles, using co-operative learning, interdisciplinary connections and multiple intelligences. One of those methods is TREP\$, now in its eighth year at Cedar Hill.

"TREP\$ offers an after-school, hands-on program to young potential entrepreneurs," said Sheri Dragone, one of three co-chairs for this year's TREP\$. "In it, the children learn how to start and oper-

ate their own businesses."

TREP\$, an acronym derived from en-TREP-reneur, is a program that shows young people how to market their own hand-made products or services.

"While TREP\$ is a company open to all fourth through eighth graders, we only conduct it for the fourth and fifth grades," said Dragone.

In a series of weekly after-school classes the students are taught about marketing, advertising and pricing, but perhaps the most important part of this learning experience is creating their own business plan.

"TREP\$ begins with five, one-to one-and-a-half hour workshops over a five-week period in February and March," said Dragone. "We had 21 kids out of 38 from last year's fourth grade come back this year as fifth

graders.

"While we try, and get the parents involved, we went into the fourth grade during a break and talked to the kids about TREP\$," said Dragone.

"Our fourth grade is small this year; 37 kids total so, it was a good turn-out for the fourth graders."

Adult volunteers and specific topics lead the hands-on activities such as product development, marketing, sales, customer service and handling money.

"Two of our volunteers are actually entrepreneurs," said Dragone. "One has her own daycare business, and the other owns a computer software company.

The TREP\$ classroom work ends with a TREP\$ Marketplace, held in the gymnasium where each child, or team will set up a table and sell their products

or services.

After a long, cold winter of after-school workshops, the young entrepreneurs emerged from their cocoons on Sat., April 22, from 4 p.m.-6 p.m. ready to show the world their entrepreneurial creations at the annual Cedar Hill Elementary School TREP\$ Marketplace.

"This year we had 52 students having fun and creating and sharing booths at which they sold cookies, candy, pickles, games, stress balls, slime, chocolates, brownies and cupcakes. Others resold jewelry, Lego figures, bath bombs or bubble bath tablets, and one kid even made a fake bow and arrow."

TREP\$ is meant to be a fun activity where the children are learning through doing, and having fun at the same time.



"One boy was selling moss in a jar," said Dragone. "It was sort of like algae in an aquarium in a jar."

TREP\$ is also a confidence and self-esteem builder for children, and it seems to work.

"All the young entrepreneurs were motivated by TREP\$," said Dragone.

"All the kids said they made money." My daughter, who is in the fifth grade, made over \$100 selling

homemade stress balls," said Dragone. "They cost about 25-30 cents to make so that was a pretty good profit, I think.

The TREP\$ workshops teach business skills through innovative techniques that focus on filling a consumer need, knowing the customer and product, being creative and inventive and empowering each child to believe in themselves.