

Today's lesson plants a seed

BY JANICE MARCHOK

My daughter's seventh- grade science teacher is enthusiastic about all things green, so when she heard about my personal crusade to save the planet, she invited me to join the Daniels Middle School Tiger Sharks team for a couple of days during their unit on air quality.

All I remember from my own seventh-grade science class was dissecting the frog. I remember dreading it all year, and when the day came, it was every bit as disgusting as I had feared. The room smelled terrible and I felt sorry for all of those frogs that had to die in the name of seventh-grade science education.

Fortunately, no animals were harmed and no formaldehyde was used in any of Ms. Pitts' environmental stations. Some N&O pages were whipped into a pulp as part of the "making homemade paper station," but that's about it.

Out of all of the activities, the students seemed to enjoy making paper the most.

I guess it's no surprise that paper-making beat out spreadsheet analysis of air quality data, trash digging, and even writing letters to the editor of the N&O.

Maybe the most valuable thing I learned during my brief return to seventh grade is that aluminum recycling is much more efficient than glass recycling. From now on when I am purchasing beverages that come in cans or glass bottles, I will be choosing cans.

I was also reminded that there is a special place in heaven for teachers.

Who knows what these students will remember 30 years from now? Maybe nothing specific or visceral, like my frog-dissecting memory -- although they will have to dissect a sheep heart later in the year.

But I do believe that Ms. Pitts and teachers like her all over this county are teaching our kids, little by little, to be good stewards of our planet's natural resources.

These students may not remember exactly where they learned what, but hopefully, when this generation reaches adulthood, respecting our planet will come as naturally to them as my generation takes it for granted.

Meanwhile, since fall is for planting, I suggest planting a tree in honor of your favorite science teacher -- or in memory of that frog that died for you in seventh grade.

As Daniels student Rohit Das explains in his letter to the editor, just one tree can do a world of good.