

Honoring Achievement

Last week gave me several great opportunities to congratulate local kids for their achievements and thank the sponsors who make them possible. Taking part in those events provides an added benefit to my job of State Representative.

First came a team of students from Sci-Tech High School. Eric DuBois and Joshua Dutton, representing their team that included Phong Ly and Joshua Dufresne, were honored in Springfield last Thursday for their participation in Academic WorldQuest. After winning a competition among Springfield schools, they represented our local World Affairs Council in Washington at this year's national competition.

The competition is sponsored each year by the Western Massachusetts World Affairs Council, and it exposes students to knowledge far beyond their daily school curriculum. Contestants put their knowledge of international affairs, geography, history and culture on the line against teams from around the nation. Congratulations to these students and their sponsors for shining a national spotlight on Springfield.

The second students to be honored were Meredith Scheiring and Poornima Manikantan, sixth graders at Williams Middle School. Charged with creating a media presentation using the theme, "It all comes back to you," the girls put together a winning Power Point presentation that was more impressive than any such production I have seen in Boston.

The contest was open to middle school students whose communities use the Materials Recycling Facility in Springfield, the MRF. The award ceremony, organized by Longmeadow's Arlene Miller, invited the entire class of the winning students and gave all the kids a pizza party. And it was held at the MRF, where a stage was set up amid many bales of recycled aluminum and plastic. I don't know about the kids, but I came away inspired by the massive amounts of former waste material that is now en route to new use in our daily lives. Congratulations to Poornima, Meredith and the MRF Advisory Board.

The third event, to my mind, honored 650 children who were not even there. They are the area schoolchildren and women who participate with Go FIT. The event, held at Bay Path College, was the Go FIT breakfast, held annually to raise money for this growing endeavor. Here is what it is all about.

Go FIT began only two years ago, the brainchild of Longmeadow's Susan Jaye Kaplan. It provides running shoes, equipment and mentors to underserved youngsters in rural or inner city neighborhoods, encouraging walking, running and personal goal setting. All equipment is free to the recipients, which is why the fundraising breakfast takes place.

The organization's growth will have positive and long-lasting benefits for any child who embraces its messages of personal health and fitness. That's why I offer my congratulations on this fantastic success to Sue, the runners and the 150 volunteers who work with them.

It was a great week for me!