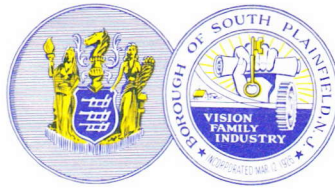


Mayor's Office-226-7601
 Clerk-226-7606
 Assessing-226-7623
 Building Dept.-226-7640
 CFO/Administrator-226-7602
 Computer Services-226-7649
 Emergency Mgmt.-226-7718
 Eng./T & M Assoc.-732-671-6400
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BOROUGH OF SOUTH PLAINFIELD

2480 Plainfield Avenue
 South Plainfield, NJ 07080

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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 Plan Bd/Bd. of Adj.-226-7641
 Police-755-0700
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 Recreation-226-7713
 Recycling-226-7621
 Social Services-226-7625
 Tax/Sewer-226-7610
 Senior Center-754-1047

July 27, 2018

Re: Puja Vengadasalam – EcoCAMP

To Whom It May Concern:

For innovation and the potential to have a long-term impact, I recommend Ms. Puja Vengadasalam's EcoCAMP as a valuable resource in our communities' work towards a more sustainable way of life.

Puja reached out to me last winter for input on her Girl Scout Gold project, looking for resources with information about air and land pollution, and I met with her and her mother. She was planning to develop an EcoCAMP: a week's worth of classes and activities designed to turn children into young environmental activists. That is, through instruction, video, science demonstrations and arts & crafts projects, she would introduce elementary and middle school children to some of the environmental issues facing the planet and engage them in the effort to address these through cumulative individual action. Since environmental protection measures depend on the existence of an informed citizenry, beginning environmental education at an early age is crucial.

We stayed in touch over the next few months, so I was able to see the project develop. I was impressed by the breadth of her research and her creativity in delivering her multi-faceted message, as well as her initiative in arranging for a venue, publicity and execution. That a 15-year old high school student would even think of creating such an event, let alone develop the curriculum, organize the implementation and act as the primary instructor, amazed me.

As Environmental Specialist for the Borough of South Plainfield, I arrange for environmental assembly programs and hands-on activities like campus litter cleanups of class nature walks. In recent years, the schools have not taken advantage of these opportunities, citing the state mandatory testing requirements as the reason: there is no time for anything else. Therefore, the EcoCAMP fills a real need in exposing children to an aspect of their world they are not seeing enough of in school.

Equally important was the main thrust of the instruction, to show the children not only the problems but things that they could do as individuals to reverse negative trends and move the Borough towards a sustainable future. By using varied activities throughout the day, not just classroom instruction, she showed an understanding of how to engage the children's attention. Their pledges about what conservation actions they would take from then on, captured on video, indicated that they understood the concepts.

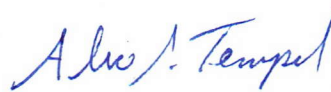
BOROUGH OF SOUTH PLAINFIELD

Very important for this project to have a permanent impact was Puja's creation of the EcoCAMP website, which contains the template for recreating the program, so that anyone could run it. Also, the website by itself is a useful source of instruction, and parents could find projects for their young children to do at home, while older children can use it on their own.

To increase the site's visibility, the South Plainfield Environmental Commission had it linked to its page on the Borough website. The South Plainfield Green Team is currently building its own website, and it will include a link to the EcoCAMP site. Puja told me she intends to keep the site updated and active, so this will be an ongoing contribution to the community.

I am available at 908.226-7621 if you would like to contact me.

Sincerely,



Alice S. Tempel
Environmental Specialist