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**SOUTHWEST HARBOR** — Pemetie School eighth-graders Catie Forthofer, Colton Sanborn and Sam Jacobson were pedaling up electricity and talking up recycling during last Saturday's first-ever Recycling Awareness Day, held at the transfer station in Southwest Harbor and sponsored by the Southwest Harbor Waste Prevention Committee.

The students, along with their teacher, Bonnie Burne, ROOT's founder Erika Shriner, and other committee members, made it their mission to tell local residents that almost everything generated by households can now be recycled.

The participation of the students provided some pointers toward the future. Catie was operating a pedal-power generator to power up a laptop computer, which was showing a video of EcoMaine, a Portland-based single-source recycling operation, with which the EMR transfer station is affiliated. They posted recycling "factoids" to educate residents on the importance of recycling.

The students also had on hand a stack

of canvas shopping bags, for which the eighth-grade had created the logo "making a difference, one bag at a time," with a graphic of hands cradling a globe. Proceeds from the sale of the bags, and from other fundraisers, are going toward the purchase of a wind turbine for Pemetie.

And with the committee's help, the students created a brochure that explains what can and can't be recycled at EMR. The brochure was sent home to the families of all the students, and was available during last Saturday's event. The list includes all clean paper, cardboard, metal cans, glass containers, and all plastic containers (numbers 1 through 7) except Styrofoam. ROOT's provided a small grant to cover the cost of printing the brochure.

Among their five major projects over the coming year, the committee wants to increase the town's recycling rate from its current 33 percent to a minimum of 50 percent, through on-going public education programs, said Shriner.

The committee will also be submitting to the town a plan for a pay-as-you-throw program, which would require residents to pay a small charge for non-recycled trash. There

## Waste prevention group aims for 50 percent recycling rate



Catie Forthofer answers questions about recycling metal. Catie, along with Colton Sanborn and Sam Jacobson, helped to host Recycling Awareness Day at the Southwest Harbor transfer station last Saturday. PHOTO BY LAURIE SCHREIBER

would be no charge for recycled items.

They want to create a swap shop at the transfer station that would allow residents to drop off unneeded household items, some electronic equipment and building materials that could be purchased by other residents for a minimal charge.

They will develop a proposal for a ban on polystyrene (Styrofoam) take-out containers.

"Polystyrene cannot be recycled anywhere in Maine and it presents a substantial hazard to birds and aquatic life," the group's statement says. "Over 40 communities in the U.S. have implemented similar bans."

And they would like to establish a town-wide composting program to include residences, businesses and restaurants.

The Waste Prevention Committee was formed last fall by the Southwest Harbor Board of Selectmen. One of the first things the committee did was ask to change its name from the Solid Waste Committee to the Waste Prevention Committee.

"We felt that we wanted to broaden our

our use of materials whenever possible and we recycle all materials when we are finished with them," they said.

All metal, glass and plastic containers are now shipped to EcoMaine in Portland where they are sorted using state-of-the-art equipment.

"We want to counter the mistaken belief that recycled materials are not really recycled," the committee said. "Committee members have substantiated that all of these containers do in fact go to EcoMaine and, unless contaminated, are never trashed."

They continued: "We are united in our belief that wasting resources is something every town and every citizen needs to be concerned about. Financially and environmentally, throwing away finite resources just doesn't make sense. The fact that this country, with only 4.6 percent of the world's total population, uses one-quarter of the earth's resources should be a wake-up call for all of us."

Committee members are Bonnie Burne, Susan Buell, Dianne Helprin, Lee

