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DoRight Leadership Corps Youth Conduct Sustainability Assessments

On June 3, 2008, Madeleine Skaller, 15, sat before the Town Board in Fishkill, New York, describing how she and several other youth “consultants” from the Brewster NY chapter of the DoRight Leadership Corps (DLC) would conduct their sustainability assessment of the municipal center and police station. This assessment would not only reduce the city’s ecological footprint but would also suggest cost saving as well.

Supervisors moved from curiosity to amazement as the Brewster High School freshman described the scope of the assessment—energy use, waste management, water, chemicals, landscaping, green building features, procurement—and an employee awareness program to motivate employees to reduce their footprints in their daily lives. She noted how DoRight “clients” are eligible for the “Plant Saver” award if they reach targeted DoRight standards, and that the Brewster chapter of the DLC had assessed over 50 businesses in Brewster to date, including the Putnam Hospital and the Queens Botanical Garden, a soon to be certified platinum LEED building. DLC youth also engage political leaders and spearhead public relations efforts, she explained. Fishkill Town Councilman Bob LaColla found Madeleine’s presentation “amazingly professional.”

The assessment of the Brewster town hall was accomplished later that summer by four young DLC members and included numerous recommendations addressing energy and other ecological issues and cost saving measures.

The DoRight Leadership Corps was created in 2005 by educator Scott Beall. Working with middle and high school age youth, the DLC is both a youth program and a sustainability education curriculum that mobilizes youth action to create a sustainable future through education, business partnerships, legislative action and public relations. One aspect of the DLC program is DoRight Enterprises – a youth-run consulting firm that can conduct sustainability and efficiency audits. Scott offers on-site and online workshops on DLC curriculum and program implementation for teachers and others (scott@scottbeall.com (mailto:scott@scottbeall.com)).

As described by Melissa Everett, director for Sustainable Hudson Valley, “It (DoRight) doesn’t compete with ICLEI or the other high-tech tools—or with adult interventions—but brings its own juice into asking basic questions and getting folks to think in fresh ways. The model brings a very healthy combo of “beginner’s mind” and technical detail into eco-auditing and motivation for change.” Regarding the educational value of the DLC for schools, Council Member LaColla noted: “Scott is addressing students’ perception that what they learn in school lacks relevancy. Scott (DoRight) provides a real world business model that requires skills in science, math, communication, etc. while addressing a vital concern in their community.”

As adult clients work with the DLC, their view of young people and their abilities evolves and grows. Tom Sprague, the owner of Bob’s Diner in Brewster New York and recipient of the DoRight Planet Saver Business award, reflects, “anyone who runs a business every day loses sight of the little things. You watch kids grow up, and you wonder if they have a better insight than we do because they don’t have so much on their minds—it’s pretty amazing how kids can see things that we can’t.”

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