



American Red Cross

Mid-Fairfield County Chapter

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Scrubby Bear Fights Germs in Fairfield Schools

Local Red Cross and Rotary Design Program

FAIRFIELD, CT- Moms know a lot about germs. Kids know a lot about getting sick from germs, because what goes around at school too often comes home with them. But now the kids are fighting back.... At least those in kindergarten through 2nd grade in public schools across Fairfield. And the students are excited! They have Scrubby Bear in their corner teaching them how to kill germs and prevent illness from spreading.

Initiating the successful Scrubby Bear program was Pat Scharr, Director of Major Gifts for the Mid-Fairfield County Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Bill Llewellyn, President of the Fairfield Rotary Club. "Bill wanted to do something to help the community's children during his term as president," Scharr, also a Rotarian, explained, "and the Red Cross wanted to educate the public on Pandemic Flu and how to prevent its transmission. The chapter had been working on the Scrubby Bear program. We discussed it and everything clicked."

Everything was a lot. A host of organizations, departments and agencies had to be consulted and won over. The Fairfield Schools had to agree to participate. Rotary through its grant programs provided the needed funding for all teacher and student materials. The Mid-Fairfield County Chapter of the Red Cross brought in Red Cross instructors to train all the k-2 teachers in Fairfield's public schools at no charge. Support was confirmed by the Fairfield Citizen Corps Council which hopes to expand the program to Pandemic Flu education for adults and seniors.

Agreeing that the program supports current health activities, the Fairfield Department of Health collaborated through school nurses and classroom teachers on its implementation. Fairfield School nurses now support the teachers with resources such as *germ lights* which illuminate left over germs on poorly washed hands. Participating teachers creatively work Scrubby Bear into classroom activities. The Fairfield School District committed to the program and strong support was given by the school district's Wellness Committee.

The Scrubby Bear program is successful, according to the Red Cross, because it's simple, preventative and employs common sense. It teaches children to thoroughly wash their hands with liquid soap and water, and then to turn the water off using a paper towel. The program is fun, according to the students, because of *The Sneeze Song* and the *Scrubby Bear Wash Your Hands Song*. Testimony that the program can be perpetual comes from a Fairfield mother reporting to her son's teacher....

"Yesterday, Colin had your student, Charlie, and his brother over for a play date. We were having an early dinner and I told the boys to go wash their hands. Charlie blurted out that he had to get his Scrubby Bear sheet. He took a paper out of his backpack which listed the steps to a good hand scrubbing and proceeded to teach the other boys. He was so excited about the stickers on his Scrubby Bear Club card! It was priceless. I was thrilled."

(MORE)

The Mid-Fairfield County Chapter of the Red Cross hopes to use the successful program as a model and to engage other organizations in other towns to implement it into their schools.

“Germs are so small,” observed one Scrubby Bear student, “but they can make you big sick. That’s why we have to wash them away.” Scharr agrees. The program is the first small step in preventing a huge problem- the spread of Pandemic Flu.

The Mid-Fairfield County Chapter of the American Red Cross has been serving the communities of Weston, Westport, Wilton, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Norwalk, Stratford, and Trumbull since 1898. The chapter is committed to fulfilling the Red Cross mission of helping people to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies by providing disaster relief, disaster preparedness, blood services, services to the armed forces, international social services and health and safety education, including first aid, CPR, swimming and lifesaving.

Volunteer opportunities in both Disaster Services and Blood Services are available at chapter headquarters 158 Brooklawn Avenue, Bridgeport, and at the chapter’s Training Center at 596 Westport Avenue in Norwalk. Funded by public donations, ninety-one cents of every dollar is used to serve clients in emergency situations. For more information on American Red Cross programs and services and volunteer opportunities, contact the chapter at 1-800-319-9935 or visit the chapter website: www.mfcarc.org.