

Lauderdale.

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**LOCAL OPINION**  
The First Word on The News



Harry DeJaager

**Long parts the beginning of end for too many kids**

When I was a kid, we used to play marbles, climb trees, fly kites and wrestle. Most kids had a pocket knife; not to carve up schoolmates, but to carve initials on trees in the woods and to use to make slingshots.

Also, we used to cut grass, not smoke it.

But a very important thing was to have a scooter. A scooter was made by taking an old roller skate apart and putting two wheels on one end of a board about three feet long and two wheels on the other end. On the front of the board you put a wooden box — most of the stores would give you a box. A small handle across the front and your scooter was ready to go.

Two or three kids racing down the street created a decibel level about the same as a 747 overhead, and made the neighborhood ladies wish for an early snowfall. But it was fun.

I wonder if kids today get the same amount of fun putting a handful of Dad's quarters into a video machine.

I think I can pinpoint the time when kids stopped being kids. It was when some mis-guided group started putting long pants on kids. That gave them the mistaken idea they were adults and could act like them. □

■ Harry DeJaager is a resident of Boca Raton.

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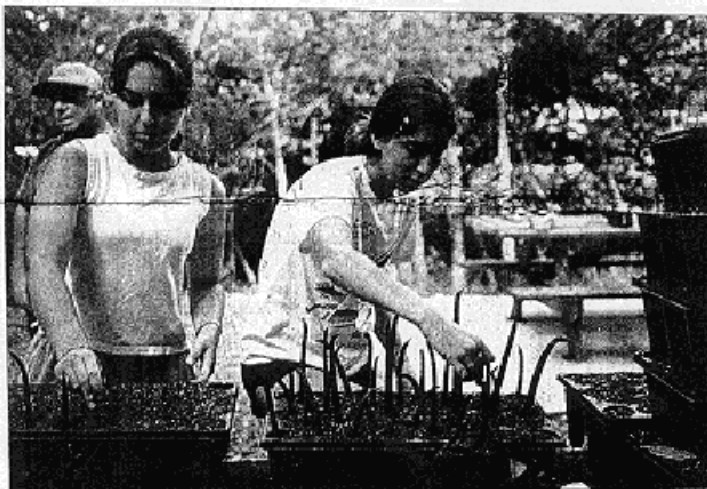
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**CLASS PROJECT**

**Students working for a reef**



By PHILIP WISNICKI FOR BOCA RATON NEWS

Spanish River High School seniors Marisa Berenbaum, left, and Amy Almbrook plant tid mangrove tree seedlings to raise money to create an artificial reef off the coast of Boca Raton.

*A group from Spanish River High School hopes to improve Boca Raton's ocean environment*

By ANNEA WISNICKI  
STAFF WRITER

What could be better than spending a morning digging in the dirt?  
Getting paid for it.

Eight Spanish River High School students raised money for each of the young mangrove plants they potted — 2,086 in all. The money, raised through pledges, will be used to construct and deploy an artificial reef off the end of Palmetto Park Road by the end of the year.

With dirty t-shirts and fingernails, the seniors potted what looked like foot-long green beans in black plastic crates, but they aren't beans at all.

They're propagules, grown-up seeds that don't fall from their mangrove tree parents. Instead, they grow in the lofty heights until they are 6- to 8-inch darts ready to dive into the earth. If they fall during low tide, the seeds stick straight into the sandy soil and begin to grow there. If they fall during high tide, the seeds are carried into the ocean, said Ken Weemhoff, the teacher of the Artificial Reef Construction and Deployment class. There is no telling where they will end up.

These particular seeds are from red mangrove trees; white and black mangrove trees have smaller seeds, explained Harvey Rudolph, an environmental analyst with Palm Beach County's Environmental Resources Management department.

**Strangers in our midst**

Mangroves are native to Florida, but many other exotic plants have taken their place, Rudolph said. The mangrove plants the students potted Tuesday will be replanted in places where exotic plants have taken over.

Last year, Palm Beach County replanted nearly 100,000 mangrove plants in several different locations, including Gumbo Limbo Nature Center and Red Reef Park. This year, they expect to plant around 14,000, Rudolph said.

Several curious pigeons circled the picnic table where the class potted the plants, hoping

the students were going to eat instead of just play in the dirt. The students gave them curious glances back.

Alicia Grossman organized the mangrove-seed pledge drive. She said this was easier to set up than other fund-raising activities like walk-a-thons.

"We have done something that is important," Grossman said. "And it relates to our class."

**Slow earnings pace**

Last year, students in the class earned about \$1,000 gathering mangrove seeds, and they hope to earn the same amount this year.

But that only inches them towards the \$10,000 they need to create and deploy artificial reefs. Three members of the class serve as the grant writing team, and they hope to raise \$10,000 this year from grants.

The class already has applied for a grant from the Golden Bell Foundation, which is part of the Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce, said Kim Bernheim. They are also applying for grants through the U.S. Department of Education and other national organizations.

Other students are working on getting the proper permits from the state to sink several one-ton, cement half-circles in the ocean off Palmetto Park Road. The reefs serve as a home to young fish that need protection from predators.

On Friday, the class hopes to see algae and coral, as well as young fish, on the artificial reefs the class deployed last year, said Cory Kravitz. They will be diving to see the reef, which is off the coast of Palm Beach.

"That will be the first time we are observing them since they have been deployed," Corey said. □

■ For more information on the artificial reef project, visit the class's web site at [www.greocities.com/artificialreefs1999](http://www.greocities.com/artificialreefs1999), e-mail them at [artreef@greocities.com](mailto:artreef@greocities.com) or call Ken Weemhoff at 247-2260, Ext. 2495.

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