

Congratulations SERT Champion Kathleen Flaherty, Speech and Language Pathologist



Q: What are the qualifications for being a School Eco-Response Team Champion (SERT)?

A: Someone that is passionate about saving the planet.

Q: What four (4) components do you need to have a successful SERT Program?

A: (1) Supportive Administration, (2) Flexible Building Service staff, (3) Active student participation and (4) **Kathleen Flaherty (Kate)**.

Kate is the Speech and Language Pathologist at Bethesda Elementary School and also serves as the schools' SERT Coordinator. Saving the environment is something Kate has been involved in most of her life, which is probably a reflection of her father, who was one of the original employees of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

As SERT leader at Bethesda Elementary School, Kate organizes monthly SERT meetings with staff members to keep them up to date with the SERT and recycling programs. Kate also inspires her staff and students to share their ideas and incorporates them into the SERT effort at Bethesda Elementary School. This helps sustain a fresh approach which increases the momentum of the SERT program at Bethesda Elementary School.

Kate receives a lot of support from her principal, Lisa Seymour, who asks her staff members turn in a shutdown checklist before they leave for long weekends or long breaks. Support in the program comes to Kate from building service staff who replaced all of 32 Watt fluorescent light tubes with 25 Watt fluorescent tubes in the building. The building service staff maintain a strict shutdown of lights, computers and HVAC systems when not needed, with Kate's encouragement.

Kate is extremely proud of her students. Bethesda Elementary School's student team is made up of 5th grade students who meet weekly. They join together to collect the recyclable paper and report the good, the bad, and the ugly, in terms of energy conservation. Exceptional efforts come from three severely autistic children who are in charge of recycling bottles and cans twice a week. Kate says, "Unexpectedly, they are extremely (obsessively) diligent about keeping lights off in bathrooms, telephone rooms, storage rooms etc."

Bethesda Elementary School engages all grade levels in working together to produce a public service announcement on their own television show, "Being Keepers of the Earth," on **BE TV**.

The SERT Program at Bethesda Elementary School succeeds because of active support from the administration, building service staff and students. The leadership and the passion of Kathleen Flaherty is the key!



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