

NEWS

# Earth Day is a birthday at Framingham recycling plant

**Joe O'Connell/Daily News staff**

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Earth Day was cause for two celebrations at Conigliaro Industries on Waverly Street.

Yesterday was not only the annual day geared toward raising awareness about the environment and reusing, but it was also the anniversary of when the local recycling company opened its doors 21 years ago.

"Earth Day is always an exciting time here," said Cynthia Conigliaro, the company's public relations manager.

To celebrate, Conigliaro Industries offered tours showcasing its recycling capabilities.

A group of students from the Fay School in Southborough, some wearing Fay School hard hats, were taken around Conigliaro by Richard Garrison, vice president of operations.

"I like giving tours," Garrison said. "It's fun, and the kids are a hoot."

Opened on Earth Day in 1990, Conigliaro has recycled more than 50 million pounds of material over the two decades. The main product is what Garrison called feeding stalk.

One example of feeding stalk that Conigliaro ships out is plastic, and the students got a chance to see various plastic products ground up. The ground plastic is then either used in Conigliaro's own products or sent to plastic companies to be reused.

The tiny shards of plastic are used in the mixture for Conigliaro's Boston Best Patch, a pothole filler that also contains sand and a tar substance.

"It's nice to see when the kids make the connection of what the recycled products are used for," Garrison said. "We talk to them about why we recycle, but it's great when they see exactly what the products are used for."

The first product the company manufactured is called PolyCorn, a packing peanut made entirely out of recycled polystyrene foam. The students saw how a machine breaks up the foam, separates all the dust from the original product and converts it into the smaller, white packing material.

The students were excited to see Conigliaro's mattress shredder, which breaks down entire mattresses so the different parts can be reused. Conigliaro has been recycling mattresses for about 12 years and was the first commercial company in the United States to do so, Garrison said.

The plant accepts mattresses from residents and commercial businesses but does charge depending on the size of the mattress.

"This is an impressive facility," said Kathy Macleod, one of the Fay School group's chaperones. "They are one of the only companies in the country that recycle mattresses. It seems to be so far advanced. Think of how much space mattresses take up in landfills."

At Fay, recycling is a major part of the school day for students, Macleod said.

The entire school recycles, and students start to learn about green awareness and reusing at the preschool level. Touring Conigliaro helps broaden the students' awareness, Macleod said.

"It's amazing all the different things you figured out to recycle," Macleod told the students after the tour. "This is important, not only for you, but for your children."

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