

The Patriot Ledger

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Print Page

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Scituate students learn proper sun safety

As part of "Massachusetts No Fry Day," which will be held on Friday May 28, students at the Hatherly Elementary School in Scituate on Thursday were given a lesson in sun safety and melanoma prevention.

SCITUATE - When asked who in the room had ever had a sunburn, all the children in the lunchroom at the Hatherly School raised their hands.

As part of Gov. Charlie Baker's recent proclamation marking today as "Massachusetts Don't Fry Day," members of the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, based in Norwell, put on a presentation at the school Thursday to teach students, who range from kindergarten to the sixth grade, about proper sun safety and protection.

"The burns that occur during childhood are the ones that lead to melanomas later in life," Maryellen Maguire-Eisen, founder and president of the foundation, said. She said the rates of skin cancer are on the rise in the United States.

The presentation, led by Maguire-Eisen, covered topics including what to wear when in the sun and what skin colors are most susceptible to sun damage.

"It's important that kids learn proper sun protection early," she said.

Maguire Eisen, a nurse specializing in oncology, has been spearheading the foundation for the last 12 years. In addition to helping to create Don't Fry Day, she has also helped pass legislation banning minors in Massachusetts from using tanning beds.

Because of the sun's high intensity in Scituate, only slightly less than that of Miami, people living there are three times more susceptible to sun damage and melanoma, Maguire Eisen said.

Katie Labadia, a parent and president of the sun safety and shade committee said, "The playground had a few trees over the last year and now there's barely any shade for the kids. That drew my attention."

In celebration of Don't Fry Day, the Hatherly School is opening a store that will sell Hatherly T shirts, sunglasses and special bracelets that change color when exposed to too much sun. The proceeds will go directly to building a shade structure on the school's playground, Labadia said.

When Maguire-Eisen asked about the types of hats that people should wear in the sun, Eddie O'Donnell, 10, called out, "I have a bucket hat!"

Maguire-Eisen ushered Eddie to the front of the lunchroom to show off his gear. The room erupted in cheers as classmates chanted his name.

"I'm so proud of you," Maguire-Eisen said.

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PHOTO/ GARY HIGGINS/THE PATRIOT LEDGER

Maryellen Maguire-Eisen of the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, based in Norwell, discusses sun safety with students at the Hatherly School in Scituate on Thursday, May 26, 2016.

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Print Page