

Youth make a big difference, author shows

By **ANDRIA MOORE**

Current Correspondent

Two brothers, around 6 and 8 years old, approached the front of the room. Both boys wore blue T-shirts emblazoned with "No Waste Race" across the back. They shuffled slightly as they spoke to a crowd of around 60 about the efforts they will make to reduce trash and pollution at the Maret Fun Run and Walk in April.

As she watched, Lynne Cherry couldn't have been happier.

An author and environmentalist known for her educational children's books on climate change and humanity's role in its impact, this is the kind of activism Cherry hopes to inspire. On Sunday, she brought her story to Eaton Elementary School and invited local children to share their stories of environmental activism, a passion that started in Cherry herself as a young girl.

The creeks, the trees, the squirrels and the birds were Cherry's best friends as a child. She learned early on that if she sat completely still and silent, the animals would approach her.

"My cat was more like a dog," she told the bright young faces looking up at her. "I would go sit



Brian Kapur/The Current

Author Lynne Cherry seeks to inspire young students to pursue environmental activism.

outside in the woods and he would follow and sit with me." She wrote her first story, "Kitty Adventures," when she was 8.

"One day I came home and found out that they were planning to bulldoze the woods near my house," she said. "I felt then that the adults didn't know what they were doing, and that pretty much stayed with me the rest of my life."

Cherry has come a long way since "Kitty Adventures," authoring and illustrating more than 30 children's books, such as "The Great Kapok Tree" and "A River Ran Wild." She is also director and producer of "Young Voices

for the Planet," a documentary series that explores children's worldwide environmental impacts.

"Olivia's Oil Spill," shown at the event, explored the struggle an 11-year-old in Hopedale, La., faced during the BP oil spill of 2010. Olivia Boulter worried that the spill would harm brown pelicans during nesting, and wrote letters promising to send one of her watercolor drawings to anyone who would donate \$5 to help protect the pelicans. The story made national and international news, eventually garnering more than \$200,000 for a nearby nature conservancy.

The story was so powerful that Cherry also wrote a book with the same title as the documentary. "Young Voices for the Planet" documents numerous stories similar to Olivia's. Many of the children interviewed had never realized the struggles facing the environment, or the impact they could have on it until watching the series or reading Cherry's books.

"I initially never doubted how much influence my books would have on children, because I know how much books impacted me when I was a child," Cherry said.

Amid all of the valiant efforts

See Activism/Page 17

ACTIVISM: Youths persevere

From Page 17

being undertaken, the environment is still clearly a major concern for Cherry as she ponders the current political climate.

"I truly feel that children are our hope," she said. "Because when children go and talk to elected officials, it cuts through. They say, 'Do you care about your grandchildren?' And it shames them."

Cherry laughed while recounting how much easier it is for children than adults to convince officials to revoke laws and pass bills. "The kids do it in weeks or months," she said.

Ruth Caplan, president of the Cleveland Park Citizens Association, which sponsored the event, was thrilled at the turnout for her friend's presentation. "This isn't the end, but the beginning," she said of neighborhood efforts to take care of the environment.

"I'm very pleased with the kids who came and made speeches," Caplan said. "It is very important in their development."

Lynn Parseghian, executive director of Cleveland Park's Tregaron Conservancy, and her daughter Alexa were invited to speak alongside Cherry about their own personal environmental efforts. Like her mother, Alexa has participated in sustainability events, including cleanup efforts for Rock Creek Park.

"I've been so inspired by all the different ways people are helping," said 14-year-old Alexa. "I want to continue participating as much as I can in helping the environment."

Cherry believes children can have a powerful impact. "I like to think of it as the future is suing the present," she said. "Suddenly, it's a whole different way of thinking when [adults] are confronted with the future."

own red carpet!

— Marcus Har

Mann Elementar

Every year Mann cal. Kindergarten do first; then first- and ers do theirs; and fir fourth- and fifth-gra biggest musical. The grades (below third) the Community Roc but the big musical : at the Greenberg Th

In the past, we've "Knights of the Rou "Go West," "Ben Fr It," "The Wright Br "The Best Little The Town." These music learn about many in ics. This year we're about the women's s movement. It's about women who got tog "It's time for us to s to men, because it's we're not being trea

Our director is n Ms. Sarah Frei, who doing this for longe remember. When as something about the Ms. Frei said, "I lov joy on the students' they are on stage."

We are all very e looking forward to j newest musical abo suffrage. Stay tuned article in May wher you how successful

— Christopher
Sechriest, Filippo

