

## **Word of school bug plan spreading**

Other schools asking MCCSC to assist them in chemical-free insect control

By Laura Lane, Herald-Times Staff Writer May 24, 2000

A common-sense, nearly chemical-free approach to bug control used in 20 Monroe County schools has reduced the number of cockroaches sightings from more than 100 to an average of two each month.

Integrated pest management, the practice of removing food, water and shelter so that pests don't feel welcome and move in, has essentially wiped out local school cockroach populations.

No one was sorry to see them go.

Nor is anyone complaining about the absence of the 25 gallons of bug-killing chemicals that are no longer sprayed in Monroe County Community School Corp. buildings each year.

"When we sprayed the schools monthly, they would come in and spray around the baseboards," said Jerry Jochim, integrated pest management coordinator for the MCCSC. "Then we'd have kids sit down right there on the floor."

Five years ago, the MCCSC began an experimental program of IPM at three elementary schools. Students and school personnel were instructed in the ways of bug life, reproduction and what attracts them to places where people congregate.

Crumbs had to go. Cardboard storage boxes were replaced with plastic containers with lids. Cracks were caulked to make entry more challenging for six-legged pests.

And when a bug is spotted, in comes Jochim with a small baited trap that's hidden from sight. It does its dirty work without emitting bug-toxic fumes into the air.

The "new" way to rid schools of pests has brought considerable attention to the MCCSC. The school district won a state Excellence in Pollution Prevention award in 1997 for its 90-percent reduction in the use of bug-killing chemicals. Then the Environmental Protection Agency awarded the MCCSC a \$30,000 grant to further develop the program and spread the word.

Last November, the EPA gave the MCCSC its Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Award during a ceremony in Washington, D.C. The award came during a year when the U.S. General Accounting Office reported 2,300 cases in which children had been affected by pesticide exposure. About 300 cases required medical care.

The May edition of Ladies' Home Journal magazine ran an article titled "Danger in the School Yard" that cites the MCCSC as a school district where IPM is effective.

And this school year, Jochim and MCCSC planning director John Carter, once an IPM skeptic, traveled first to Arizona and then to Alabama to initiate IPM programs in schools there. A \$50,000 EPA grant to the MCCSC funds traveling and training for other school districts.

In the Kyrene school district in Tempe, Ariz., Jochim and Carter established an IPM program in 18 schools. There, scorpions, not roaches, are the main pest concern. But the methods are the same.

Traveling to Auburn, Ala., last week, the MCCSC bug guys shared information and initiated a training schedule for three schools: an elementary, middle and high school.

Alabama has bigger cockroaches than those often seen in Indiana schools, Jochim said. The biggest pest there is the small, brownish German cockroach, the scourge of kitchens.

A few years ago, Jochim was in the MCCSC maintenance department, fighting bugs the old-fashioned way — with sprays or by smashing on sight. He had never heard of IPM, or imagined he would be traveling the country espousing its virtues.

"It's so foreign to our generation, to think we can control roaches and other insects without spraying them to death," Jochim said. "It makes so much sense, we wonder why doesn't everybody do it?"

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