

By Paul Feely

West High honored for reducing energy use

Battle of the Buildings: West placed 43rd overall out of 245 buildings, and was the top school in New England

MANCHESTER —In the terms of energy use, the Blue Knights went from being of the biggest users, to being named the biggest loser – in all of New England.

During an assembly at Manchester West High School, Environmental Protection Agency officials congratulated students, faculty and staff on their accomplishments in reducing energy use and their participation in the Energy Star “Battle of the Buildings”. Out of 11 buildings in New England entered into the competition, West pulled off the second largest reduction in energy use, finishing as the top school in the competition in New England.

“The Manchester School District has shown tremendous commitment and effort in making their buildings more energy efficient, and using the Energy Star Benchmarking tool helps them to measure their success, said H. Curtis Spalding, Regional Administrator for EPA-New England. “This provides multiple benefits – energy costs come down, air quality is improved, greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change are reduced, and schools can get national recognition through Energy Star Programs.”

According to information provided by Manchester’s school department, roughly 80 percent of the building energy consumed by all the city facilities is used by schools, and reducing school energy use has become a prime focus of the city’s facilities department.

“West High entered as one of 245 buildings across the country competing in the Battle of the Buildings to reduce energy use by the greatest percentage over a time that stretched really from 2010 into 2011,” said Kevin O’Maley, Manchester facilities manager.

According to O’Maley, West was selected for the competition out of all Manchester schools and buildings thanks in part to the new high efficiency heating boilers installed at the school.

“As part of our overall energy program, we replaced two 600 horsepower boilers, with two new high efficiency boilers,” said O’Maley. “That cut the horsepower we were using in half. We also worked with people to find the proper temperature settings for rooms, and worked on the ventilation systems.”

As of the end of August EPA figures indicate West had reduced its energy use by 23 percent over the past year. As a result, West placed 43rd overall in a field of 245 buildings. It was the only building entered from New Hampshire, and was the top finisher in all of New England, placing 19th overall in a field of K-12 school buildings.

“The competition wasn’t limited to schools,” said O’Maley. “It involved all municipal buildings.”

Spaulding said that participants in the contest saved a combination of more than 240 million kBtus (thousand British thermal units) of energy and \$5.2 million on utility bills annually by improving their operations and maintenance and upgrading equipment and technology, the equivalent to the average amount of electricity used by more than 3,600 homes annually.

At West alone, the reduction in energy use saved almost \$75,000 a year on utility bills, according to O’Maley. An EPA release on the contest estimates that the green house gas emissions reduced by West’s efforts was the equivalent of taking 31 cars off the road, and the electricity used by almost 14 homes per year.