

Fifth-grader on mission to make world a greener place

by Carley Dryden

For many fifth-grade girls, life is all about, well, boys.

For Jane Fishman, it's about the environment.

Fishman has spent much of her 11 years at the beach.

"I love the ocean so much," she said. "I realized that I saw more trash every time ... things littered about on The Strand. It's disgusting."

While many her age would ignore the filth, Fishman began exploring the elements cluttering her environment. Despite her age, Fishman has a thorough understanding of the direct negative impact of greenhouse gases and pollution on the environment, and can speak on it with the eloquence and conviction of one twice her age.

"It only seems right that we should fix it," she said, noting that many people think others will do something so they don't have to.

"We have to do it or no one else will do it," she said.

The Fishman family spends its summers vacationing in the deep woods of northern Wisconsin, where they often spot bears, deer and bald eagles.

"It's just so perfect up there ... fish in the rivers, the lakes are crystal clear. That's how I want the ocean to look," she said.

Manhattan Beach is very green, she said, but "we can take it to a whole new level."

At Grand View Elementary, she has.

Fishman is the student representative for the parent environmental group, Grades of Green, and is president of the school's Earth Club. She spearheads the group's composting efforts, takes the recycling bins out of each classroom to dump in the main bin, and puts together PowerPoint presentations for younger classmates on recycling and composting.

In her neighborhood, Fishman has become the "neighborhood watchdog," her mom, Stacey Fishman, said. When small rivers of water run down the street from people washing their cars or watering their lawns, Fishman looks around to find the culprit who's wasting the state's precious resource.

In her own home, she makes sure the



Environmental advocate Jane Fishman, 11, with two of her favorite things: the ocean and her dog, Cody.

lights are turned off, no water is wasted and that the items her family members place in the trash do indeed belong in the trash. Last year, she made her own Halloween costume instead of using one that is store-bought. Fishman also makes sure the family brings its own reusable bags to the grocery store.

"In fact, on the rare occasion we have forgotten to bring our bags, Jane makes sure we leave the store holding whatever we have purchased," Stacey Fishman said.

Fishman added that her daughter was the motivation behind her and her husband's purchase of hybrid cars.

Jane Fishman said it's more difficult for adults to pick up environmentally friendly practices after years of having other established routines.

"Kids are doing it more than adults ... but not enough kids are doing it," she said. "A lot of people just want to ignore it. It's scary."

Grand View recently named Fishman as its "Citizen of the Year," not only for her green efforts, but for being a "model scholar," "outstanding creative writer," "excellent leader" and for her "insightful

comments."

"Jane is every teacher's dream to have in the classroom," said her teacher, Suzanne Claytor.

Second to her love of the ocean is her love for animals. Fishman started a face-painting business for birthday parties. She donates all of her party fees to charitable causes like "Love on 4Paws." She also donates time volunteering at local food banks.

Fishman said one day she might work for an organization like Heal the Bay. She often participates in the group's beach cleanups.

"A lot of people think because the ocean is so big it will heal itself. We have to stop the littering and take what was in the ocean out," she said.

Recently, she spoke to a group of kindergarteners at school about ways to recycle. One student recommended that children color on both sides of a piece of paper, not just one.

"That's perfect," Fishman told the student.

"If a kindergartener can get it, anyone can."