

# The London Free Press

'Do small things with

**great love'**

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## Small acts add up, young told

By KATE DUBINSKI, SUN MEDIA

A week ago he was in Kenya, watching elephants, zebras and giraffes being pelted by unseasonable hail.

Yesterday, Marc Kielburger was thrilling hundreds of little kids who sat enraptured, listening to how their small acts can make a big difference and help the environment.

"We're the leaders of today. We're the generation we've been waiting for," Kielburger, 29, said in the gym at Regina Mundi Catholic College in London, about 500 pairs of eyes starting up at him.

It was the London District Catholic school board's kick-off to Embracing the Earth: Caring for Creation, introducing eco-teams from every school that will plant trees, garden, recycle, and lead their peers in doing eco-friendly things for the planet.

Kielburger is the older brother of Craig Kielburger, who started Free the Children as a 12-year-old. The organization has built 400 schools in 20 countries around the world.

Kielburger's message -- that you don't have to be an adult to make a difference -- had the kids dreaming up ways to help the world from their own back yards.

"I'm starting to recycle," said Jordan Martens, 11, from Holy Rosary elementary.

"I didn't know that bottled water was so bad -- I'm not going to buy any anymore," said Hayley Sharpe, 17, from Catholic Central high.

"I learned to take care of the world and to be more thankful for what we have," said Bailey Rapposelli, 9, from Monsignor Morrison elementary in St. Thomas. "I'm not going to leave water running anymore."

The eco-teams that attended from each of the board's 50 elementary and eight high schools were told to find ways to improve their schools' environmental accomplishments.

Many of the kids had heard of Kielburger and his younger brother, and listened intently to his message.



Environment message: London District Catholic school board pupils and students listen to Marc Kielburger of Free The Children at Regina Mundi College at the Embracing the Earth: Caring for Creation event yesterday. He urged the young to help the environment. (MORRIS LAMONT, Sun Media)

"When we met Mother Teresa she told us, 'Boys, we can do no great things but we can do small things with great love.' We have to do things not because it's easy, but because it's right," Kielburger said.

"The people who suffer the most from environmental destruction contribute the least to it." The Catholic school board has signed up with Ameresco Canada Inc., a company that retrofits schools to save boards both money and emissions.

"As (Catholics) we have a sense of wonder in a universe we did not create and certainly are not free to destroy," said Corrie Gicante, the board's acting director of education. The board will save about \$500,000 in utility costs by the end of the retrofits, in December 2008. It pays about \$4 million a year now.

The board will also reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 15 per cent by upgrading equipment, installing new boilers, roofs, and windows.