

Kids CAN Protect Marine Life!

By Willy Jones, age 11



This summer, a bunch of kids from Pennsylvania saved some whales and other marine life.

When Maria Wilson, the executive director of the Waverly Community House near my home in Pennsylvania, found out I was a junior intern for Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, she asked me to do a presentation during the summer Comm Camp program, where kids from grades K-7 have fun during the summer.

I was part of Wild Seas and Skies week, and my main idea was to show kids how litter can affect marine life. A major threat to whales, dolphins, fish, turtles and manatees is fishing line. If an animal gets tangled up in fishing line, they only have a small chance of surviving.

So, at Comm Camp, we recycled empty tennis ball cans into containers where anglers can put their used fishing line to keep it out of the environment. It was actually really easy to do. The first thing I did was to collect the empty containers. I put a box at two local tennis centers, Birchwood Tennis and Fitness Center and Scranton Tennis Club and the players were so glad to help. I collected about 90 cans in just a few weeks.

I learned about the project from Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation, which had asked for volunteers to put the cans together



Fishing line recycling containers created by kids during the Comm Camp at the Waverly Community House in Pennsylvania

in connection with their Marine Debris to Energy Project and the Stow It - Don't Throw It Project, which is a youth-driven effort to recycle used tennis ball cans.

Blue Ocean Society gave me some stickers and a flyer to put into the cans, and the Stow It - Don't Throw It project provided other stickers and materials to tell anglers why they should recycle their line. Even here in Pennsylvania, we have birds that are tied up with the line, and boat engines can get ruined if a line gets tangled up in the propeller. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania doesn't have an organized fishing line recycling program in place - yet. Hopefully that will change. But one is in place in New Hampshire, so we can help that one.

I brought all the tennis ball cans to the Comm Camp, and after talking to the kids about how awesome whales are, and how litter can hurt them, they all wanted to make the cans to help protect marine life.

The Comm Camp kids did their own drawings of marine life to put into the cans as a way to thank the anglers for recycling the fishing line. They were colorful drawings

that I hope will show the anglers that all kids care about the environment.

To make the recycling cans, first we ripped off the labels on the tennis cans - that was fun. Then I gave them each a Blue Ocean for Marine Conservation sticker to put inside the cans. That was pretty fun too, and the kids did it just great, even the little kids. We rolled up our drawings and the Blue Ocean Society information flyer like treasure maps and put them inside the cans. Then, we attached the lid with a zip tie to make sure it wouldn't blow into the water.

Blue Ocean Society will take the cans and give them to anglers in New England to help keep the fishing line off the beaches and out of the water. The anglers in New England will see that Pennsylvania kids care about whales and other marine life, because we do!

The kids were so proud to do this project, and they did it really well. They all tried their best and the cans looked awesome when we were done. It is an easy project to do, and fun too! Best of all, the kids knew they were helping to protect marine life and that they could make a difference. I am so proud of all the kids who saved some whales.