

Student Helps Restore Waterway

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BRISTOL, Pa.—Two years ago, Ebbie Akinwande and classmates from Franklin Delano Roosevelt Middle School took a trip to the nearby Delaware Canal. Built in the early 1800s, the canal once transported coal and manufactured goods between the cities of Bristol and Easton, Pa.



What the student found both surprised and disheartened them. “The water was yellow and full of garbage. It smelled too,” says Ebbie, 14. “And the walls of the canal lock were covered in graffiti.”

The students decided they had to do something about the pollution. They collected water and soil samples from the canal and analyzed them in science class. Both the water and the soil had a low *pH*—they were heavily acidic. They were also high in *lead*, a poisonous heavy metal. The high acidity and lead content made the water and soil unfit to support much wildlife.

The students worked that evidence into a presentation, which they took to the Pennsylvania state legislature. Ebbie was chosen to explain the results of the water and soil tests. “I was very nervous,” she says. “But we had spent so much time on the project that the information was imprinted in our minds.” The presentation prompted the state to allocate several million dollars for a cleanup of the canal.

“Ebbie did a magnificent job,” says Meredith Mueller, Ebbie’s science teacher. “She has a natural curiosity and was very determined to find the sources of the pollution.”

For her efforts, Ebbie received a Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes last fall. The prize is a \$2,000 scholarship given to “outstanding young leaders who have made a positive difference to people and our planet.”

“Working on the project taught me that teamwork is one of the biggest things in life,” says Ebbie. “Without the cooperation of students and teachers, nothing would have gotten done.”