

My column this month is submitted by the Belmont High Environmental Club. We toured Casella, the company that receives Belmont's recyclables. I had a wonderful time and was impressed by these students. They were well behaved, engaged and asked thoughtful questions during the visit. Belmont High is fortunate to have students and teachers of this caliber. Please enjoy the Environmental Club's perspective of this field trip.

The field trip to the Casella Recycling's Material Recovery Facility (MRF) was highly anticipated for our Environmental Club at Belmont High School. As a new club this school year we've searched for opportunities to become more involved. When this trip approached there was no way any of us wanted to let the chance slip by. At 8:00AM on April 30th we took public transportation (in an attempt to lighten our carbon footprints) to Casella. Thirteen students and three chaperones, one being the advisor of our club Mr. Lefebvre, attended.

The MRF is located in Charlestown next to Bunker Hill Community College. When we first approached it, the outside looked like a place where trash was gathered and somehow disposed of, but once we entered we learned about the process that Belmont's recyclables go through.

We were given an orange safety vest and pair of safety glasses before the sixteen of us were split into four groups, each having a worker at Casella as a tour guide. We were able to see and smell some things that many people will never encounter in their lifetimes. Our group leaders, one of them actually being the daughter (Liza Casella) of John Casella, who started Casella Waste Systems in 1975, took us through the massive facility telling us about each phase of the system, the technology and its purpose. One of the most memorable stops on the tour was the last one in the warehouse. Unbelievably massive tied up bales of recyclables were piled up at least 18 feet high!

Once the tour finished we were given an opportunity to ask questions, which everyone seemed to have. We discussed different materials that are difficult to recycle in this process, such as straws. We were also told that unless you screw your bottle cap back onto your water bottle before you put it in the bin, it wouldn't be able to be recycled because of its size. So make sure to keep the cap on when you're recycling!

Once we left the plant we walked to Faneuil Hall and grabbed lunch, but many of us were shocked to see the lack of recycling bins there. The trip to Casella is certainly something none of us will forget. Actually seeing where our recycling goes made us all more aware of the environment. We would like give thanks to everyone that made it possible for us to go on this life changing journey. And remember, this is our Earth so treat it with kindness! Recycle!