

Stacey Hill
Science Department Head

P 508-799-3270
E SHill@worcesterschools.net

Doherty Memorial High School
299 Highland St
Worcester, MA 01602

Jailene Matias
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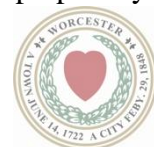
Doherty Envirothon Team Combines Science, Community, and Culture in Forest Research Project

This year, the Doherty Memorial High School Envirothon Team has taken environmental action to new levels with a dynamic community engagement project in Worcester's Elm Park, specifically Newton Hill. As part of Harvard Forest's "Our Changing Forests" program, the team measured, identified, and tagged trees within a 10m x 10m research plot, entering their data into a regional database shared by over 50 schools across the Northeast. This effort helps scientists and students understand how forests store carbon, respond to natural disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes, and support long-term climate resilience.

What sets Doherty's project apart is the extraordinary teamwork, persistence, and passion that each student brought to the field. Through data collection, presentations, and in-depth study of Worcester's urban forest, the team deepened their connection to local ecosystems while enhancing their scientific and leadership skills. They also engaged in an unforgettable cultural learning experience by meeting with Andre StrongBearHeart, a respected leader of the Nipmuc-led organization *No Loose Braids*. As the original stewards of the land, the Nipmuc people offer vital perspectives on sustainability and connection to nature. Andre's visit brought stories, songs, and dances that celebrated Indigenous traditions and reminded students of the long-standing relationship between people and the forests they depend on.

As they prepare for the statewide Envirothon competition on May 22, the Doherty team—guided by their dedicated advisor Ms. Hill, continues to shine as a model of youth activism, scientific inquiry, and community engagement. From fieldwork in Elm Park to learning from Indigenous voices, these students are not only gathering data—they are growing roots in their city and leading the charge to protect our shared environment. Last year's team earned the Community Engagement Award, and this year's group is determined to bring it home again, showing just how powerful education and collaboration can be.

The Envirothon is North America's leading natural resource education program for high school students, emphasizing hands-on, team-oriented problem solving and community involvement that prepares young



people for environmental careers and active citizenship. For more information on the Massachusetts Envirothon, reporters can contact Diane Baedeker Petit at 413-253-4371 or Diane.Petit@ma.usda.gov and more information about the Doherty Envirothon Club reporters can contact Ms. Hill shill@worcesterschools.net or Jailene Matias for more interesting topics matiasjailene@gmail.com