

Conservation News & Announcements

October 21, 2007



Goats Help Clean Up Invasive Plants at Gatewood

With a strong focus on environmental education, stewardship and science, Gatewood Elementary School hosted around 60 weed-eating goats on Oct. 18-21. The goats helped clear overgrown ivy and blackberry bushes as part of the school's playground renovation project, *Operation Imagination*. The Gatewood PTA, in partnership with Local Union 609 and SPS Grounds staff, sponsored this event after many attempts to address years of overgrowth.

Pinky the Goat munches ivy at Gatewood



Now that the invasive groundcovers and thorny bushes that cover the steep hillsides in the west and south areas of the school are cleared, volunteers will remove the remaining roots (without pesticides), plant more environmentally friendly trees, lay down recycled burlap (donated by Starbucks) and spread mulch.

Gatewood principal Rhonda Claytor said "Gatewood is a school that actively teaches environmental stewardship and learning by doing. As an educational community that embraces a holistic approach to learning and service we are excited about the positive impact this entire project has on children and helping them become active stewards for our environment."

Operation Imagination began about three years ago when a group of PTA parents, students, and community volunteers came together to plan and renovate the school's playground and equipment. The plans include a multi-generational learning garden, student art on the entryways, a second play structure for older children who use the playground, a new playfield, and new trees.

The group has received funds from the city's Small and Simple Grant Program and a \$90,000 matching grant from the city's Department of Neighborhoods. The majority of matching funds will be met through volunteer time and labor. A group of parents and Seattle Public Schools gardeners have been gathering for cleanup weekend parties and have logged almost 500 hours.