



JOED VIERA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Ethan Morgan delivers a rain drum to Singer Farms.

Outdoor, hands-on learning

TRIP: Environmental science students taught about fish, farms.

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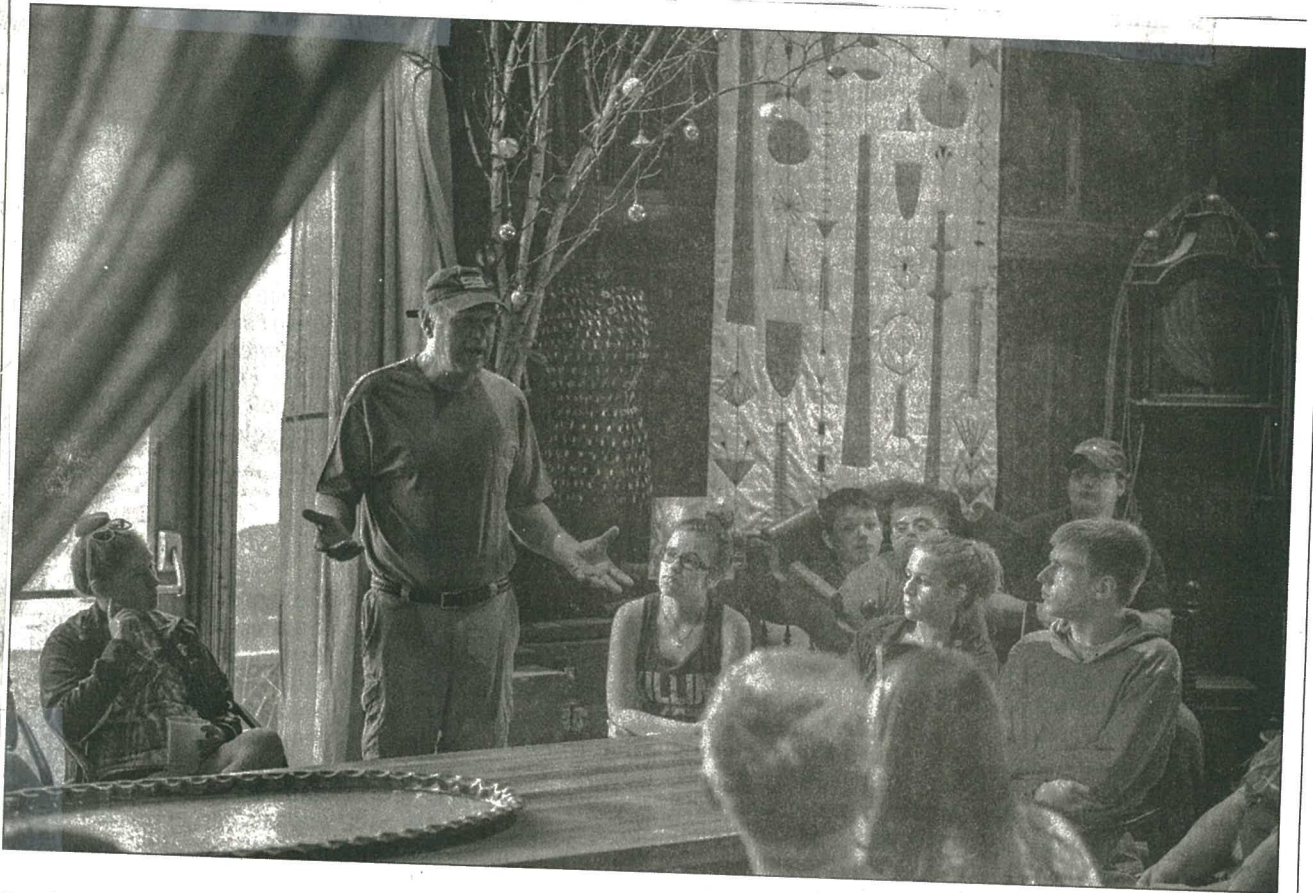
NEWFANE — Students in Rich Meyers' environmental science classes took their annual trip to Olcott Harbor to release the fish they raised in the "Trout in the Classroom" program Friday.

The Newfane High School students released the 97 trout they had raised in class, a little more than double the number they had successfully raised in previous school years.

"We made a few adjustments to the tank, and that seemed to make a difference," Meyers said.

The other parts of the hands-on field trip included a visit to Singer Farms Naturals on Lake Road in Appleton to learn about the farm and retail store's use of green energy and sustainable farming practices.

The refurbished, pre-Civil War era barn, which houses the business was transformed to harness green energy and to be as environmentally friendly as possible. Straw hay bales were used as insulation during the building, and solar panels to provide electricity and thermal



Tom Szulist speaks with Newfane High School students at Singer Farms.

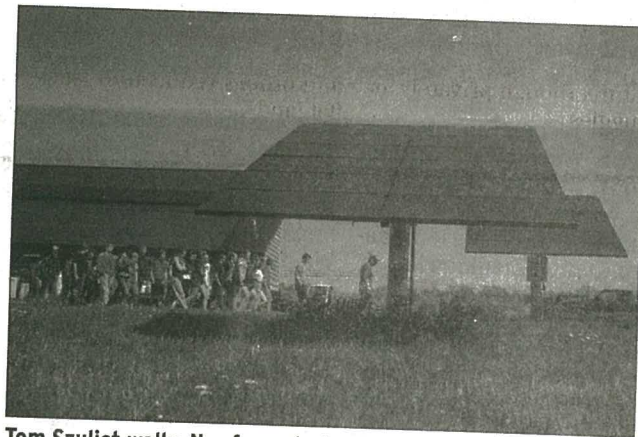
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energy for hot water were installed. The building is heated using a gasification stove, which burns wood at a very high temperature, converting it into flammable gases which burn much cleaner than traditional wood stoves. The farm also has its own wind turbine.

"When I talk to students about green energy, I see the sparks go off," owner Tom Szulist said. "Suddenly, the kids are asking 'why aren't we doing this?' I try to tell them that just because every-



Tom Szulist walks Newfane students around Singer Farms.

one is doing something one way doesn't mean that they have to do it that way."

Szulist worked as a stockbroker for years before meeting his wife Vivianne (whose

family has owned Singer Farms for five generations) in 2008.

Szulist said that he decided to follow his heart by growing

organic food, starting Singer Farms Naturals as a sister company to Singer Farms.

"It's not work, it's a journey," Szulist said.

The students also did water quality testing and a macroinvertebrae survey at Keg Creek, which is accessible from the Singer Farms Naturals property.

The students found a fairly good variety of macroinvertebrae life in the creek, which is a good sign, Meyers said.

"It shows us the health of the creek is pretty good," Meyers said. "They also found low phosphate levels, which means that there's not a lot of fertilizer run-off."

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