

Feinstein student fights for animals

Jessica Kitchen speaks before House Judiciary Comm. to support bill

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COVENTRY — Sixth-grade student and animal advocate Jessica Kitchen made her voice heard, loud and clear at the Statehouse on April 15 when she addressed the House Judiciary Committee in support of House bill 5660, which, if passed, would ban the import, sale and possession of elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn in the state of Rhode Island

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Submitted photo • Courtesy Dr. Arthur Lisi

Feinstein Middle School sixth-grader Jessica Kitchen speaks at the Statehouse on April 15 in defense of elephants and rhinoceroses.

Kitchen fights for animals in speech before legislators

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"It was an amazing experience," she said.

Kitchen, a student at Coventry's Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, explained how she learned of the unique opportunity.

"One day when I got home from school, my mother told me someone from the zoo called and asked her to go to the Statehouse to present my views on the subject," she said. "I wasn't so much nervous as I was excited and I just spoke on what was in my heart."

Kitchen said zoo representatives wanted a child's perspective to be heard on the subject.

"I strongly believe that the poaching of these majestic creatures is not needed," she said. "Elephants are highly intelligent, expressive and joyful creatures as well as our largest land mammal."

She explained they are very similar to humans in that they mourn their dead herd members, staying with them for hours or even days.

"Why should we wipe out two of our most significant land animals just for a little trinket?" she asked. "Ivory doesn't have any use to humans and is only used as a luxury item. If we keep doing this to elephants and rhinos, the next generation of children may never get to see them and it would break my heart to see these animals go extinct just for the money."

She went on to state that when 96 people are murdered, it makes the country stand up and pay attention.

"When 96 elephants and rhinos are murdered, you only see it infrequently on national television or in newspapers," she said. "Americans need to wake up, take their blinders off, stop worrying about their electronics and

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— Jessica Kitchen, Feinstein sixth grader

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Kitchen has been passionate about animals and nature since she was a little girl and one of the activities she is involved in at the zoo is called Nature Swap, where she and others create things from nature and submit them to the zoo for points, which allow her and others to "swap" their creation for another's.

Kitchen's social studies teacher, Robert Jordan, said he's been teaching his students about civics and the various bills being heard at the state level and is so proud of

Kitchen.

"She told me she was going to be presenting, I went to support her and she did great," he said.

Feinstein Principal Dr. Arthur Lisi described Kitchen as a strong animal rights advocate who participates in youth programs at Roger Williams Park Zoo, including Nature Swap.

"Because of Jessica's passion and activism, Roger Williams Park Zoo Director of Public Relations Jan Mariani asked Jessica to speak before the committee," said Lisi. "It is so

special to see students take responsibility and discuss these issues and advocate got a cause.

They're taking on challenges and taking ownership of things important to them."

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