



Roman Spuzak, a student in Fort High teacher Jody Bonner-Vicker's Grade 8, invited mayor and council to take part in the storm drain stencil initiative the class will be undertaking on May 30 along the riverfront here.

—Duane Hicks photo

Students set to stencil anti-pollution message

By Duane Hicks
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What goes down the storm drain goes into the watershed—and that's why it's vital to keep

joyed taking part last year and will do so again on May 30.
“I was impressed at how well-behaved your students were, Mrs. Bonner-Vickers, and I'm sure they will be this year, as well,” she remarked.

things like soaps from car washing, fertilizers, and oils out of them.

That's the message being sent by local students who will help promote stewardship of the water quality in the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed here on May 30.

As part of the binational International Watershed Co-ordination Program, teacher Jody Bonner-Vickers' Grade 8 class at Fort Frances High School class will be spray-painting the message, "No Dumping: Drains to River," using a stencil next to storm drains along the riverfront and nearby streets that day.

They'll also be picking up garbage along the way and hanging door hangers on neighbourhood doors to let people know about the project.

Bonner-Vickers and four of her students—Joelle Bruyere, Aiden Godbout, Paige McFayden, and Roman Spuzak—made a presentation to town council at Monday night's meeting to explain the importance of the watershed and the need to keep it clean.

"You're in a hurry. You empty out your pockets and the contents falls to the ground and washes into a storm drain," Bruyere told council.

"Oh well. What can you do? It was just one wrapper. You're just one person. What difference does it make?" she added.

"Little do you know that that chocolate chip granola wrapper went straight into our water, polluting our lakes."

"And it just doesn't stop at the granola wrappers," echoed

"They did a good job and certainly concentrated on doing the best job they could, even though they had the wind blowing a little bit at times, with the paint and everything."


The stencil to be used, which depicts a fish and the aforementioned message, was made by students in Robert Guertin's high school shop class last year.

Before going out to paint, Bonner-Vickers' class will take part in an interactive session with Jolene Simon of the Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District to learn about how watersheds work through the use of a 3-D model.

The initiative is a partnership between the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation, the Town of Fort Frances, Fort Frances High School, City of International Falls, Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Many communities in Canada and the U.S. have similar stencils or have installed permanent markers.

Students in the Falls will be undertaking the same project there on May 21.



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Godbout, noting that oils, gas, fertilizers, soaps, and cheap McDonald's toys your three-year-old has suddenly lost interest in all might end up in the storm drain.

"The list goes on and on.

"All of the stuff entering our rivers and lakes is having an effect on our water and our wildlife and their habitats," he stressed.

McFayden said the class is trying raise awareness of what goes into our lakes and rivers.

"We want Fort Frances to know what is happening so we can more and more help and support," she remarked.

Spuzak asked mayor and council for their permission to stencil the storm drains east of the Sorting Gap Marina, as well as put hangers on doorknobs, to raise awareness of the need to protect the watershed.

He also invited mayor and council to join them on May 30.

Mayor Roy Avis thanked the students for their presentation, noting, "It's great to see young folks in our community having this current concern as we move forward."

Last year, Bonner-Vickers' class took part in the first-annual stencil-painting project, and their work still can be seen at some storm sewer grates along the La Verendrye Parkway.

Coun. June Caul said she en-

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