

Fishy fence has serious message

Kids' art raises water awareness

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Residents of Burnaby, B.C., decided some years ago to beautify a chain-link fence by decorating it with painted wooden fish to remember thousands killed by a chemical spill into a local creek.

The idea turned into the Stream of Dreams mural project, a tool to teach children how to protect natural waters and the life in them. It's now spreading to school fences across Halton and Hamilton, thanks to Conservation Halton and the Bay Area Restoration Council.

The latest dreamfish installation goes up today at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Elementary School on Belmont Avenue in the Gage-Cannon area.

About 250 students from junior kindergarten through Grade 8 attended watershed workshops over the last two days before putting their imaginations and paint brushes to work on wooden cutouts ranging from finger-length sculpins to salmon almost half a metre long.

Cris Giavedoni-Keravica, a parent who helped organize the effort, said the resulting mural will serve as a reminder of the need to protect Hamilton Harbour's watershed, "brighten up a barren stretch of fence and beautify the neighbourhood with original art."

The restoration council's Kelly Pike told a group of Grade 7 students their fish could be symbols of those in Spencer Creek and Cootes Paradise killed by contaminated runoff from a pesticide packaging plant fire in Dundas last year.

"Go to Spencer Creek today and you're still not finding all the insects you should. The fish population is recovering, but the insects on which they feed are definitely down."

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Photos by John Rennison, the Hamilton Spectator