

Halton's new Yellow Fish Road program emphasizes the importance of clean water

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**
Special to *The Champion*

Little yellow fish will soon appear near storm drains in neighbourhoods across the region thanks to Conservation Halton's new program, Yellow Fish Road, launched May 11.

Started in 1991 by Trout Unlimited Canada, the nation-wide program has involved 60,000 volunteers, primarily Canadian youth, in educating the public about the importance of clean water by painting small, yellow fish beside storm drains and handing out fish hangers explaining the initiative to neighbouring homes.

Since 1991, one million fish hangers have been distributed and 100,000 storm drains marked. In December 2004, Conservation Halton took a co-ordinating role in the project for the entire Halton watershed.

"Conservation Halton decided to help all our partner municipalities deliver this program because we believe it is very neat and effective," said Hassaan Basit, watershed communications specialist and Yellow Fish Road co-ordinator.

"To me, what's really neat about the program is that it not only involves and educates children about keeping storm water and ultimately our Great Lakes clean, but it goes a step farther in that it draws on kids, the future stewards of this land, to go out in the community and educate adults and the wider community about the importance of preventing harmful substances like paint, car oil, fertilizer, and pet waste from entering our water supply."

Mr. Basit explained that, unlike the drains in our sinks and toilets, storm water flows directly into our streams, rivers, and lakes without passing through a water treatment plant, creating an unhealthy environment for aquatic animals and has the possibility of ending up in our drinking water. The name 'Yellow Fish' is derived from the fact that fish, particularly Rainbow Trout, are considered an indicator species, meaning that the water is likely unhealthy in a specific area if trout can't live in it.

The Yellow Fish Road program is offered free-of-charge and is suitable for youth groups such as Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, or school groups, said Mr. Basit. Group numbers can range from

four to 40 but the ideal number is six, he said.

"Thanks to Trout Unlimited Canada, Conservation Halton is able to deliver this program free of cost to all partners and participants. We have partnered with Halton Region, City of Burlington, Town of Oakville and the Field and Stream Rescue Team to bring this program to Halton and it will be delivered to residents of Milton and Halton Hills," said Mr. Basit.

Although the official launch of the Yellow Fish Road program was held May 11 at the Halton Regional Centre, the first group in Halton to participate, a Girl Guides Pathfinders group in Oakville, painted the first yellow fish May 2, supervised by Conservation Halton.

The program has two parts, the first being to educate the youth group about their local water supply and the impact hazardous wastes have on it. The second part gets the group of kids involved by painting yellow fish near storm drains and distributing fish hangers.

Any group wishing to participate needs to choose an area they would like to work in and select a day for painting, then they can contact Conservation Halton for the guest speaker presentation and supplies. Groups are provided paint, fish stencils, brushes, a broom and dustpan (to clean area), safety vests, goggles, and pylons, fish hangers for the doors, as well as some goodies for the hard-working group. Ideally the best time of year to participate is between May and October and the selected day must be dry so the paint does not wash away, said Mr. Basit.

"Most groups like to (work on the painting and distributing) for one to two hours. They paint as many or as few drains as they can," said Mr. Basit. "They also hand out fish shaped door hangers to residents living along the painted street. They paint in residential areas only, not major roads, for safety reasons. The take-home message is that whatever you put on the ground, be it your lawn, driveway, or road, it will go straight down the storm drain and end up in our creeks, rivers, and lakes."

For more information on the Yellow Fish Road program, visit Conservation Halton's Web site at www.conservationhalton.on.ca or contact Hassaan Basit at (905) 336-1158, ext. 270.

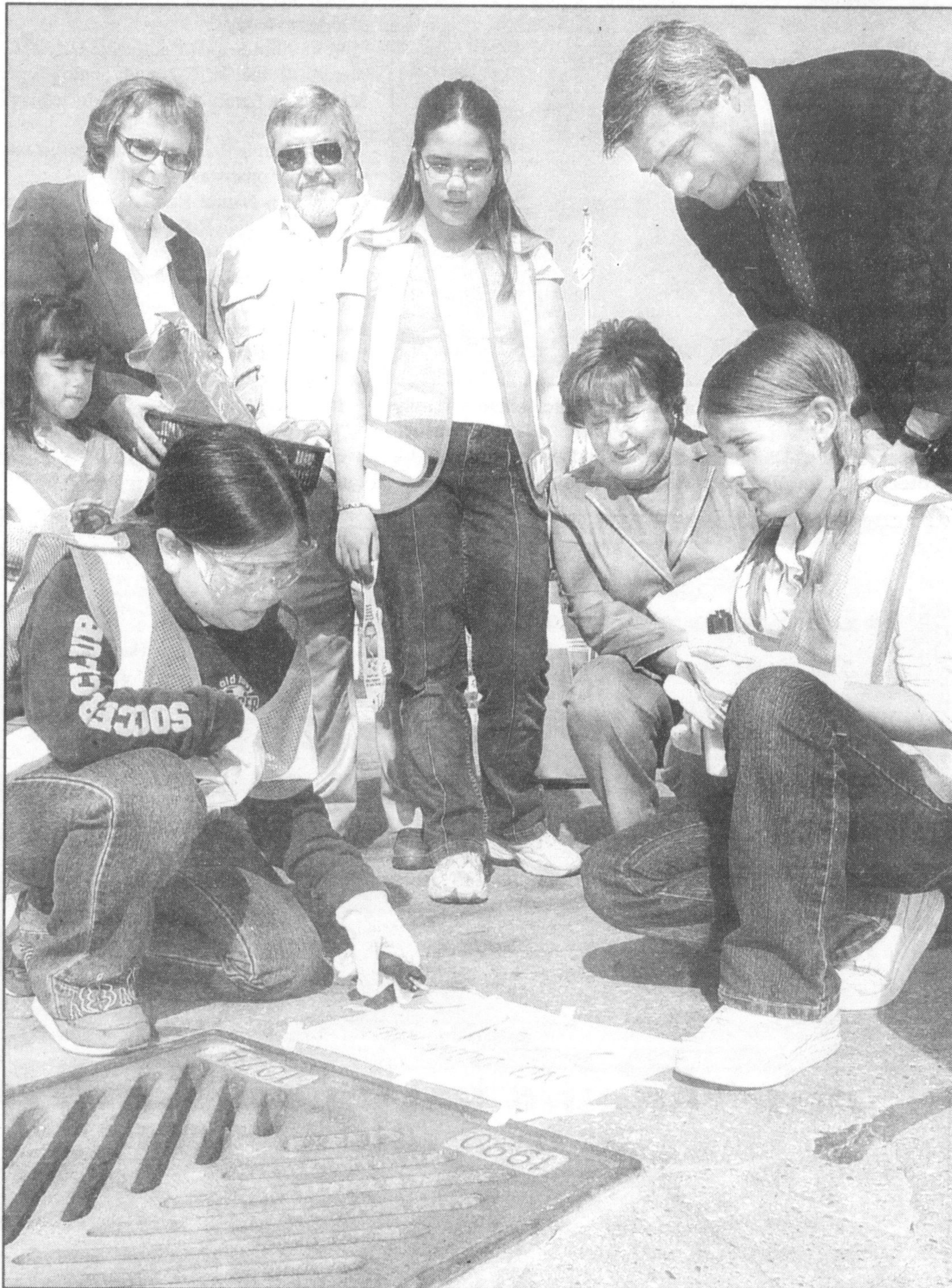


Photo by PETER C. McCUSKER

Students, from left, Rachael Wong, Alyssa Soldo, Sarah Wong and Bridgette Clohecy join, from left, Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, Conservation Halton board member Brian Penman, Halton Chair Joyce Savoline and Burlington Mayor Rob Maclsaac for the recent launch of the Yellow Fish Road program.

Anti-quarry group scheduled to meet Monday

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**
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Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) members have scheduled a meeting for Monday to mark the one-year anniversary of the group's creation and discuss the events of the past 12 months.

When news broke on the Victoria Day long weekend in 2004 about a planned application for a limestone quarry in Flamborough, the group of concerned and outraged citizens banded together to fight Lowndes Holdings Corp.

"The May long weekend marks the one-year anniversary of our community's knowledge of the proposed Flamborough Quarry. It was over that cold wet Victoria Day weekend last year that the first e-mails started flying and the first steps toward community organization were started," recalled FORCE chairperson Graham Flint.

"We have come a long way since then and the annual meeting will be an opportunity to discuss the year's activities and update people face to face."

Over the past year, FORCE has held several meetings to give residents information, update them on the progress, and keep them

apprised of the future steps.

With the likely long legal battle ahead, more than \$150,000 has been raised through donations from residents and businesses to pay for lawyers, scientists, and other experts to build a case against Lowndes Holdings Corp., said Mr. Flint.

He said FORCE has gathered information to back its position that a limestone quarry operation would damage the community's water supply, cause increased truck traffic and noise, and would destroy the peace and beauty of the rural setting.

A few months ago, FORCE's case may have been aided by provincial Greenbelt Legislation that could prevent the limestone quarry from being built.

The annual meeting, to be held at the Lawson Park Campgrounds (11th Concession East), will cover the events of the past year, celebrate the achievements, and map out the future steps to be taken to stop the proposed quarry operation.

"This is a business venture for Lowndes Holdings Corp., a way to make a profit," said Mr. Flint. "For us, this is about our families, our children, and our way of life. We're ready for the fight."

For more information, visit FORCE's Web site at www.stopthe-quarry.ca or contact Graham Flint at (905) 659-5417.

Golf course proposal has expanded

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farmer, expressed his worries with the water reservoir proposed for the course and its potential smell. Since stagnant water can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, he also cited concerns on West Nile virus. An application on the large course was initially made in 2001, but Ms

Dawkins said it was put on hold due to the Region's golf course study and the Province's Greenbelt Plan.

She noted the proposal has also increased in size from the original 18 holes to 27 since the project now includes an additional 100 acres that's currently zoned for a golf course.

Once the Town receives all comments on the proposals and the application has been evaluated, staff will bring forward a technical report with recommendations for committee and council.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at mhennessey@miltoncanadianchampion.com.