

Friend of the moraine assisted by her puppet

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Carolyn Burke, 9, cares about the places where animals live and she wants to help them keep their homes.

Inventive and determined, Carolyn has found a unique way to let animals speak for themselves.

The Thornhill resident attended a protest for the Oak Ridges Moraine last year with a raccoon hand-puppet borrowed from her sister.

As sign-bearing protesters circulated in the cold, Carolyn's puppet held up its own little sign, which Carolyn had made. "Save our trees!" it said, and on the flipside: "Not our buildings."

When the St. Anthony Catholic Elementary student traveled this year to oppose the destruction of Mimico Marsh, a wetland in Brampton, she carried a protest sign on a toy duck.

"Natural places are supposed to stay where they are," said Carolyn, who can see the issue from the animals' point of view.

"It's like having your home right there and when you come back from work or school it's vanished and you don't have anywhere to go," she said.

Carolyn said children at her school understand the moraine needs to be protected, but they don't understand going to meetings will help. "I went to one of



CAROLYN BURKE: Nine-year-old's puppet protested against Oak Ridges Moraine development.

them and it was great."

In fact, Carolyn gave a speech at a meeting in June in which she warned paving over the moraine's natural spaces is a bad decision to make.

"If we keep this up our Earth will be destroyed. Our Earth will be like a big dot of grey," she said.

She said she knows development is necessary sometimes and that "some people won't like it" if certain areas are ruled off-limits.

Carolyn said it's important for people to tell town or city councillors what they want to see done to save the environment, because their councillors may not know. "They need to know," she said.

Environmentalist starts with fellow students

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Caring for the environment is a matter of doing simple things right, says Marc Lamirande.

Simple things such as throwing trash in a garbage bin, not in a recycling bin or on the ground.

You'd think that would be easy for students at Brother Andre Catholic High School, but Lamirande, a member of the Markham school's environment club, knows better.

Club members spent part of their year at Brother Andre's cafeteria picking trash out of the recycling bins.

"Some kids, it takes a while to reach them. There's no harm in trying, though," said Lamirande, 18, who adds a chain reaction can start with one student.

Someone may throw a can in the garbage thinking, "Oh, it's only me that's doing this," but others who see that will do the same thing, he said.

With around 2,000 students at the school, results adds up. "Some kids probably have two or three cans of Coke a day."

The OAC student said a lot of people refuse to carpool to school — another simple thing that makes sense. "People who live next door to each other tend to take separate cars."

There are environment clubs at several high schools around York Region, but Lamirande



MARC LAMIRANDE: School environmental club cleaned up Mount Joy Pond area in Markham.

said Brother Andre's makes a special effort to serve the greater community.

This fall, the club cleaned up the area around Markham's Mount Joy pond, which is near the school and was covered by cigarette butts, McDonald's food bags, coke cans, beer bottles and other debris.

It had looked so disgusting, Lamirande said, that once cleaned up, it seemed like a different place. "You looked at it and you wondered where you were."

The club also joined other groups last month in planting trees at Milne Dam Conservation Area, a task made difficult by the park's muddy ground.

Teen began volunteering in town at age 12

BY ASHLEY JOANNOU
Special

What better way to do your part for the community than to give up your time?

It was this theory that led Radhika Sharma to start volunteering back when she was only 12 years old.

"My community has given so much to me and my family, this is what I try and do to give back," said the now 18-year-old Milliken Mills High School student.

Every Sunday for the past four years Sharma has been volunteering at the Markham Stouffville Hospital pediatric ward.

"I spend a day with some of the kids there. It makes you feel very grateful for what you have," she said.

Sharma is also a member of the Milliken Mills Youth Task Force, where she collaborates with other youth in the area to put on various activities throughout the town.

This includes four years working as a volunteer at the Milliken Children's Festival where she does face-painting and creating colourful hair wraps for young children.

An entire day of face-painting and hair-wrapping would likely be quite tiring for the average adult, but for Sharma this is just part of the routine.

"I really like what I am



RADHIKA SHARMA: Milliken Mills student volunteers at a variety of places in Markham.

doing when I help others, and I don't notice the time go by," she said.

"My parents have been key in influencing me to help others. They taught me to find something you like and do well and then use it to help the community."

Volunteering is something that everyone should be involved in, she said.

"I would absolutely recommend it to everyone with spare time. You meet great people and it makes the community you are living in seem even more important."

"Just find something you like to do and do it in whatever time you have to spare. It is well worthwhile."

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