

Cranbrook science director eyes Rouge River rescue effort

BY KURT KUHAN
STAFF WRITER

Michael Stafford thinks it's time people in Oakland County start paying more attention to the plight of the Rouge River. And if he has his way, the Cranbrook Institute of Science, of which he is the director, will be the leading voice in changing people's perceptions about the long-neglected river.

Stafford is spearheading efforts to create a center for watershed education at the institute, located on the campus of the Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills. Since the campus lies within the Rouge watershed, the Rouge would be the center's primary focus.

In Stafford's vision, the center would educate visitors, especially children, about water ecology issues, provide

resources for teachers, and facilitate partnerships between stakeholders in the Rouge watershed, which covers much of Oakland County.

Stafford believes the institute is the perfect place for a water ecology center, because several branches of the Rouge run through Cranbrook, including the Main Branch. Just as important, however, is the fact that 85,000 children already visit the institute on an annual basis to participate in its other educational programs.

"We have a real potential to have an impact on the way children think about water quality issues," Stafford said.

"The children are already here. We're already teaching them about other subjects. It only makes sense to teach them about water ecology. There's no one better suited than us. Plus, we have the river right here on

campus. We can use it as a living classroom."

Stafford said the biggest challenge the institute faces is changing perceptions about the Rouge, which for generations was considered no more than an open sewer. The best way of doing that, he believes, is reaching the children.

"In my experience, you can convert adults if you can explain the issue to them," he said.

"But if you really want to have a long-term impact, you have to start when they are young. If you can affect the way they think as children, it will make a difference in their actions as adults. It becomes a self-sustaining cycle."

Like with many other ideas, the biggest roadblock to creating the center is money. Stafford said it would need a Ph.D.-level curator, who would

specialize in hydrology or ecology, plus a staff of educators. Cranbrook would also need funds to create an exhibit.

The failed Proposal K, a cultural tax that voters shot down Nov. 5, would have provided much of the funding for the center. Now, Stafford will have to look elsewhere. He said his focus will be soliciting funds from corporate sponsors and individual donors.

The concept of the center did receive a shot in the arm recently when Oakland Plus, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the environment, donated \$25,000 to Cranbrook. Stafford said the institute will use the money for a water festival, similar to the one that is held in Wayne County every year.

Scheduled for next September, the water festival will be a one-day event for

about 800 Oakland County schoolchildren to learn about issues affecting the Rouge.

Cranbrook has also done much to cement ties with Friends of the Rouge, a group of volunteers that has led efforts for more than a decade to clean up the Rouge. Although the group is based in Dearborn Heights, Cranbrook recently offered some office space so the group will have more of a presence in Oakland County.

"This is a great opportunity for us, because we've been so Wayne County-focused. We really want to establish some partnerships in Oakland County, because so much of the watershed is up there," said Carolyn Foster, Friends of the Rouge managing director.

Foster said the group will help Cranbrook implement water-quality monitoring and

other educational programs, as well as coordinate clean-up activities.

Stafford said the main thing people need to understand about cleaning up the Rouge watershed is it will take a regional effort. If there isn't full participation by every community in the watershed, the Rouge will never fully be healed.

As an example, Stafford points to Cranbrook's Kingswood Lake, which is an impoundment of the Main Branch. It is filled with sedimentation because of poor practices up stream.

"What we do here to improve water quality on Cranbrook's 315 acres won't amount to a hill of beans, until we deal with the issue on a more regional basis," Stafford said.

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PHOTOS BY BILL BRADLEY FOR OBSERVER

Celesta Smart enjoys her lunch that began with, what else, but tomato soup.

Red Hat Society forms

The ladies at the Botsford Commons retirement community decided to see what it might be like to start a Red Hat Society at their community house Monday.

As required by the Red Hat Society's bylaws, only ladies past the age of 50 are allowed in the club, red hats must be worn and fun must be had by all.

"I heard they had a great time," said Bonnie Berzins, community activities director. She said she couldn't make the event, but the ladies told her afterward that they plan to host another Red Hat function in January.

"A lot of them had stories about their hats," she said.

The "Warning" poem by Jenny Joseph helped spur the club several years ago by a group of ladies in California.

At the commons Monday, prizes such as brandy and pickles, which are mentioned in the poem, were handed out and the



Bettie Williams takes a more contemporary approach with a scarlet Red Wings cap.

poem was read. And just for kicks, tea and chocolate-covered cookies were eaten before, not after lunch.

Price honored by state association

The Michigan Marketing Educators Association recently named Nancy Price, a marketing educator at North Farmington High School, the recipient of this year's Dr. Louis R. Graziano Outstanding Marketing Educator Award.

This award annually recognizes an educator who manages an outstanding marketing education program.

Price began teaching marketing education at North Farmington High School in 1999 and previously taught at Finney High School. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from Central Michigan University in 1981 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in business education and a master's degree in business

administration from Eastern Michigan University.

In the classroom Price "is one of those teachers who with her energy, perspective, attitudes, and beliefs, impacts the tone of a school on a daily basis," according to the North Farmington High School Principal Richard B. Jones.

Jones went on to say, "Nancy's involvement sponsoring DECA is one reason the program thrives. Kids love to be around her and work hard for her."

DECA, an association of marketing students, is the nation's only student organization designed specifically for students interested in becoming future leaders of the marketing, management and entrepreneurial fields.



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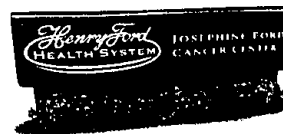
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