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Students partner with city to solve 'geese problem' at beach

May is nearing an end and 80-degree days are no longer outside the realm of possibility. That means it's almost time to slip on the sandals, grab the sun tan lotion and head over to Carver Lake Beach.

By: Hank Long, Woodbury.Bulletin

May is nearing an end and 80-degree days are no longer outside the realm of possibility. That means it's almost time to slip on the sandals, grab the sun tan lotion and head over to Carver Lake Beach.

The local summertime attraction doesn't officially open to the public until June 14, but the beach sands have never been more ready for visitors. Thanks in part to a group of local students who worked with the city to keep the geese off beach earlier this spring.

The students, who belong to the Gateway Program at Royal Oaks Elementary, competed last fall in a the FIRST Lego League competition to find a local problem, research it and propose a solution. They settled on an issue they noticed has plagued Woodbury somewhat, said Bob Kammann, parent adviser to the team nicknamed the "Demo Bots."

"The kids noticed the problem that geese in our community leave on the trails and in the parks," Kammann said. "So they tried to come up with a system that solves the problem and doesn't harm the geese."

After researching past efforts, interviewing experts in landscaping and studying geese behaviors the team proposed a simple system they hypothesized would persuade the geese to find other locations, rather than the beach or a heavily-traveled park trail, to leave their waste.

In their research the students found that geese need to frequently move between water and the grass they eat. They can get frustrated by barriers that force them to fly – even for short distances, Kamman said.

With those behaviors in mind the students proposed a low-cost, temporary fence system they believed would frustrate the geese into choosing a location that doesn't impact a location such as the more popular areas at Carver Lake Beach.

The students then presented their findings and solution at the regional FIRST Lego League competition, which is held annually to encourage students to solve problems in a variety of categories.

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Putting in a fence



Daniel Musil, Oscar Burns, Henry Burns, Alex Samuelson, Molly Kammann pose with Woodbury parks supervisor Paul Griffin while they install a temporary fence to keep the geese off Carver Lake Beach earlier this spring. The students belong to the Gateway Program at Royal Oaks Elementary and proposed the fence system as a part of a FIRST LEGO League project. Submitted photo.

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The students finished their competition and then went one step further. They contacted the city. They proposed their solution to the problem that has affected the beach mostly during the spring as geese are migrating, said parks supervisor Paul Griffin.

"This time of year it seems like the geese usually are looking for a nesting area and kind of hang around afterwards," Griffin said. "That does cause a little bit of a mess on some parts of the beach early on."

Griffin liked the student's idea so much that he met with them in April and worked with the students to implement their idea at the beach.

One month later Griffin said the fence system seems to be working.

"It definitely gives us one less thing to worry about as we get ready for the beach season," Griffin said.

"It's nice that these kids not only saw the issue; they came up with a solution."

Kammann joked that the real thrill for the students was being able to use the term "goose poop" during an official presentation.

"They really did learn a lot," Kammann said. "The biggest lesson for them is that even as fourth graders they realized they can make an impact in their community."

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