

Students spend day on the water

With help of new Canoes on Wheels program, Solon Springs hopes to see all students enjoy an afternoon of canoeing at least once before graduation

By Emily Kram

ekram@superiorteleg.com

On June 1, freshmen at Solon Springs School were learning their lessons outside in a canoe. For some of the students, it was their first time on the water.

"I've been in a kayak and a row-boat, but never in a canoe," said Lucas Shepard, a student in Joanne Zosel's physical science class.

Shawn Woodhull, heading out with the same group, was paddling a canoe for just the second time in his life. But neither of the novices was nervous about paddling on Upper St. Croix Lake. They were just happy to be learning outside on a sunny day.

The students were able to get outdoors for a paddle because of a program Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters began this spring to allow more children to enjoy the area's lakes, rivers and streams.

Canoes on Wheels (COW) is patterned after a similar program started by retired science teacher John Kudlas. Kudlas, from Rochester, Minn., helping the St. Croix Headwaters group get its program off the ground, and the canoes are now ready for use.

A trailer loaded with eight canoes and the necessary paddles and life jackets is provided to interested groups through COW. Scott Peterson, executive director of Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters, said the equipment will be loaned to a number of organizations, but forming a partnership with local schools is paramount.

With the ninth-graders' expedition earlier this month, COW is well on its way to becoming a fixture in the Solon Springs curriculum.

Zosel's physical science class split into three sections and used the canoes three separate days. Shepard and Woodhull were in the final group, and up to that point, there had been no major mishaps or swamped canoes.

"I haven't heard anything like that," Shepard said. "I'm sure I'll probably be the first."

The students launched their canoes at the beach in Lucius Woods Park and headed to Cut-A-Way Dam. Along the way, Zosel couldn't help but highlight some of the history of the region.

"This area is very history rich," Zosel said. "We talk about how Solon Springs got its name. We go down to

the site where Tom Solon had his original bottle company in 1902 and we talk about that."

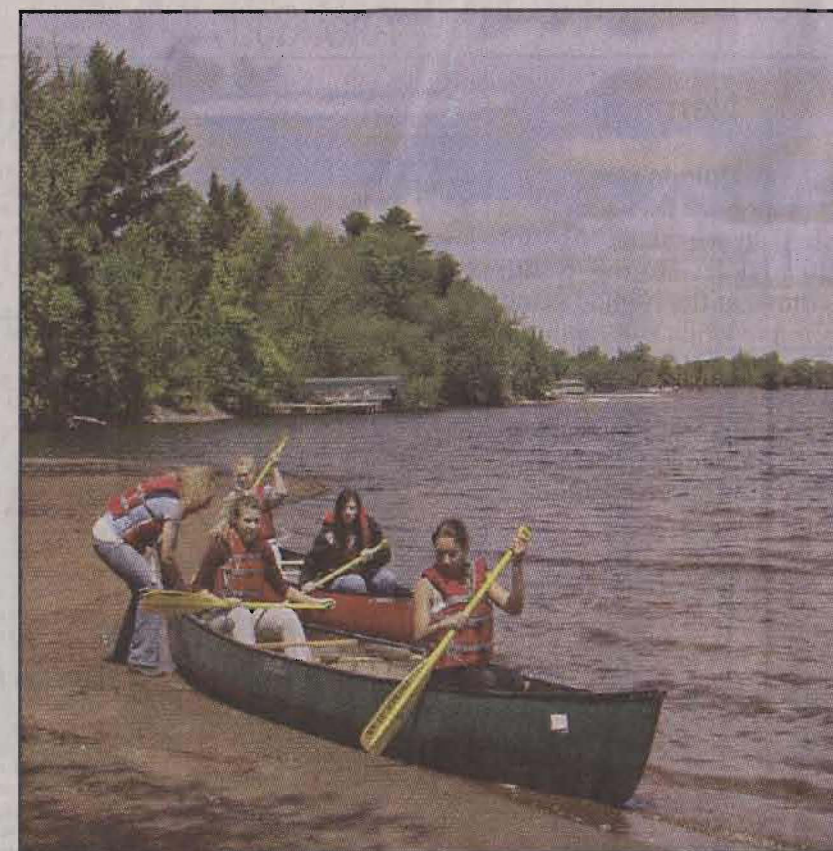
Zosel also talked with the students about the earlier history of the area, from when voyagers met Native Americans and began trading, and events even further back.

"A lot of kids don't realize that this place was inhabited about 3,000 years ago," Zosel said. "And it's all just right here under this gorgeous environment."

The main point of the trip, though, was science. The class conducted a water quality project in Park Creek a few weeks prior to its canoeing voyage, so students tested the water of Upper St. Croix Lake for comparison. They measured dissolved oxygen levels and other chemical components found in the water.

"Phosphate is a real issue on this lake right now, so we're going to look at that," Zosel said. "Another thing we're going to look at is just baby steps for canoeing, like how to launch, one paddle step and then water etiquette."

The Park Creek water quality test had always been part of Zosel's curriculum, and now the canoe paddle will also be an annual event. If every-



Joanne Zosel helps students in her ninth-grade science class launch canoes on June 1 on Upper St. Croix Lake. (Emily Kram/ekram@superiorteleg.com)

thing goes as planned, every high school student in Solon Springs will have had the chance to canoe by the time this year's freshmen graduate.

"I'm only able to do this because FotSCH has been able to provide these wonderful tools," Zosel said. "What better way to show kids this than to be out actually experiencing a paddle like the voyagers did? That's just so wonderful."

After the canoe trips were finished, Zosel received another nice surprise – a \$200 check from Murphy Oil as part of the Class Acts program. The money went toward the cost of substitute teachers while Zosel was out on the water.

The COW equipment will be available to groups during the summer. For more information, call Scott Peterson at (715) 520-7732.