

Students Learn About Water Treatment, Jobs at Wastewater Plant

By Eric Fish

Students from kindergarten through seventh grade toured Mackinac Island's Wastewater Treatment Plant on Stonecliffe Road Monday, May 21, to learn about conservation and where everything goes with every flush of the toilet.

Amidst plugged noses and occasional grimaces, the children huddled around laboratory manager Jay Davis as he took them by each tank to show the 20-day to 28-day path sewage takes from being flushed down the toilet to being filtered and recycled back to the Great Lakes.

"It was cool seeing where all the water went," said fourth-grader Dana Roguska.

And the children listened to Mr. Davis as he talked about the path it takes at the plant, from the original tank, or head works, to the circular primary purifiers that separate the solids from liquid, and eventually to the final purifiers, before the water is disinfected and sent back out into the lake.

"It was really cool to find out what our lake was made of," said sixth-grader Collin Armstrong.

Mr. Davis said the plant pumps about 60,000 gallons of water a day in the winter months and as much as 800,000 gallons a day in the prime tourist months. Right now, the plant pumps around 500,000 gallons a day.

"Last summer was one of the lowest average flows we've had, just because tourism was down in general," Mr. Davis said. "Tourism was down, the hotels weren't full, (and) we're not get-

ting the flow of the restaurants."

The children were also taken into the area where Mr. Davis conducts tests every day to determine if the water meets environmental standards before being pumped back out into the lake. He works in that room about four hours each day.

"I felt that was pretty neat, with all those chemicals and stuff," said sixth-grader Louis Clark.

Among the necessary tests is a phosphorus evaluation that takes Mr. Davis about two hours to conduct.

"I like it," he said. "I'm doing my part to help the environment, keep the water clean. I swim in that water, I drink that water, I want to keep it clean."

Mr. Davis' tour was met with enthusiasm and overall enjoyment from the children.

"It's cool looking at poop," said fifth-grader Adrienne Rilege.

Although some continued to grimace from the occasional draft of unpleasant smells, others didn't seem to mind.

"It smells like the beach," observed fourth-grade student Meadow Greenlee.

And according to Mr. Davis, if everything is working right, it shouldn't smell foul.

"If things are operating the way they should be," he said, "it should never smell at all. It should smell like freshly plowed earth."

Aside from educating the children on the way things work, kindergarten and first-grade teacher Vicki Urman said that it's important for students to see what things the island has to offer.

Volunteers Help Staff Stuart House Museum

By Karen Gould

Sylvia Perault welcomes visitors when they enter the Stuart House Museum on Market Street, as she has for the last four years. The city, which owns the building, is now managing and staffing the museum following a three-year management contract with Mackinac Island Carriage Tours.

Through the winter, the city's Buildings and Grounds

Committee discussed taking over museum operations to allow for an expanded season in early spring and late fall. The spark needed to make the change came in March from Island resident Candi Smith, who sent a letter to City Council explaining she had a group of volunteers who were willing to help staff the museum.

In May, the city hired Ms. Perault, a former Carriage Tours

employee, and is paying her \$7.50 per hour for a 40-hour week, while volunteers now fill in unstaffed hours to help keep the doors open each day from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. On a busy summer day, the museum has as many as 200 visitors.

Built in 1817, the two-story Federal-style clapboard building was once the headquarters of John Jacob Astor's American

**Please turn to page 23*



From left, fourth-grader Kyra Kolatski, fifth-grader Jessica Beaune, and sixth grader Hailey Bean peer into the final purifier tanks on a May 21 school field trip to the Mackinac Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. It takes 20 to 28 days for the wastewater to be processed through the plant's cycle.

"We also want to show them some of the jobs in our community," she said. "I want to show them the kind of skills you need."

"Also, I want them to know what's happening. We want them to know about how many times you flushed the toilet and those long showers."

According to Mr. Davis, the 35-year-old Wastewater Treatment Plant could be in store for a possible upgrade.

"There's been talk over the past few years to get some improvements done, maybe build a whole new plant, and that's going to cost between eight and 12 million dollars," he said.

Currently, the plant has a capacity to handle about 920,000 gallons of water daily, a number that the plant came close to reaching years ago when the Island was in its peak

tourist season.

Aside from the Wastewater Treatment Plant, another year-around task of the Department of Public Works that fluctuates with seasonal tourism is the amount of garbage and solid waste that people accumulate.

The DPW asks that citizens to sort their waste into three separate categories: blue bags for garbage that will go to the landfill, clear bags for organic waste that can be composted,

and blue tubs for recyclables.

The waste is sorted in the Solid Waste Handling Facility off British Landing Road and distributed appropriately from then on.

Proper bags are available for purchase on the second floor of Community Hall at the DPW office weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Blue bags are available for \$3 each, clear bags for \$1.50, and recycling tubs are free to Island residents.

Residential Collection Schedule

The following is the Mackinac Island Service Company's current 2007 pickup schedule:

- Tuesday – Landfill and compost bags from East Bluff, the Mission Point area, and Downtown.
- Wednesday – Recycling pickup alternates route by week. East Bluff, Harrisonville, Mission Point, and Downtown receive the service one week then recycling rotates to the Annex, West Bluff, Stonecliffe, Woodbluff, Stonebrook, and the British Landing area.
- Thursday – Landfill and compost bags from Annex, West Bluff, and Harrisonville.
- Friday – Landfill and compost bags from Stonecliffe, and the British Landing area.

Compost Material

Waste products that should be placed in clear or beige bags for compost purposes include:

- cereal boxes
- computer and meat paper
- food scraps and fruit and vegetable peelings
- cardboard egg cartons
- postage and manila envelopes
- paper bags
- tissues and napkins
- paper plates
- paper milk cartons
- news and telephone books
- textbooks
- pet food and horse feed bags
- wooden toothpicks

Landfill Material

Landfill materials in Blue Bags
Waste products that should be placed in blue bags to go to the landfill include:

- aerosol cans
- appliance filters
- clothing
- small appliances
- candy and food wrappers/bags
- prescription bottles
- diapers
- plastic utensils, straws and cups
- broken glassware
- cigarette packs
- cat litter
- bottle tops
- toothpaste and bathroom containers
- sponges and scrubbing pads
- building materials and light bulbs



The Stuart House Museum volunteer organizer Candi Smith (left), along with museum employee Sylvia Perault, and volunteer and City Clerk Karen Lennard, stopped by the museum Monday, May 21, to review volunteer hours for the weeks ahead.