

# THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

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## EcoArt teaches students a valuable lesson

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Artists in partnership with environmentalists and public education -- it sounds like the kind of collusion that would make Fox News hosts wake up in a cold sweat, clutching their pictures of Charlton Heston.

So it must be a good thing.

And it's happening more and more in Hamilton. Recently, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board piloted the addition to the curriculum of a component on the Niagara Escarpment, in conjunction with the Giant's Rib Discovery Centre. It was very successful.

In a similar vein, the Hamilton Naturalists' Club (HNC) teamed up with The Print Studio, 173 James St. North, on the EcoArt project. EcoArt puts a member of the HNC in a classroom to talk about such topics as endangered species, bird migration and habitat, and then the students, with the help of an instructor from The Print Studio, make images based on what they learn.

Jen Baker, Head-of-the-Lake land trust co-ordinator for the HNC, went into the Grade 7 and 8 classrooms at Memorial Elementary School for the first go-around of EcoArt.

She spent five weeks with the students, and at the end of it they had produced individual art works, mostly depicting animal species they had researched, and a colouring book to spread the message to younger grades; and they designed and screened their own T-shirts.

"The project had a fluky start," says Baker. "It was just some friends talking, about getting more environmental learning in the schools, and someone from The Print Studio thought it would be a perfect fit. We both wanted to try."

To see if it would work, they ran a pilot project at Dr. Davey School, with Grade 3 and 4 students.

Meanwhile, they secured a grant under the Edith H. Turner Foundation, through the Hamilton Community Foundation, which they used to expand the program for older kids, at Memorial.

"We wanted to work with the older kids to get more of a message across," says Baker. And to get that message to trickle down to the younger ones.

Baker visited the classrooms once a week for five weeks.

"I was pleased with how many students came up with their own ideas," she says.

"We brainstormed about images and words." Matt McInness, from The Print Studio, helped them sketch and trace their images and turn them into prints, which formed the basis for the colouring book and for some individual images.

"I'm hoping we can expand the program in the fall, maybe even get into the high schools," says Baker.

For The Print Studio's part, EcoArt is but one of many programs, such as Jamesville Hub and James North Cannon Express, that the facility has going to connect it to inner city neighbourhoods and youth.

To learn more about EcoArt, contact the HNC at [hamiltonnature.org](http://hamiltonnature.org) or The Print Studio at [www.theprintstudio.ca](http://www.theprintstudio.ca).

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There's an inner cowboy and cowgirl in everyone and this Saturday's the time to let them out, at The Carnegie Hoedown in Troy, west of Dundas on Highway 5.

The event, which runs from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., includes live country music, country wagon rides, a pig roast and chicken dinner with all the fixin's. There will be card magic, a saloon, casino, an outdoor beer garden, dancing and games, as well as a live and silent auction and fireworks at 11 p.m.

All of it is to raise money for the famous Carnegie Gallery, 10 King West in Dundas.

Among the musical highlights will be The Smoke Wagon Blues Band, nominated for best blues recording at the last Hamilton Music Awards.

The hoedown will take place throughout the town of Troy, but the base will be the Donn Zver Pottery studio at 2290 Highway 5 West.

Tickets to The Carnegie Hoedown are \$95, with a \$50 tax receipt per ticket. They're available at The Carnegie Gallery (905-627-4265); Bryan Prince Bookseller (905-528-4508) and Donn Zver Pottery (519-647-2117).

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