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**THE BUGS ARE BACK!
MOUNT VERNON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
IS CRAWLING WITH TWICE AS MANY
"BUGS IN THE CLASSROOM"**

Mount Vernon, ME – Fourth and fifth graders at Mount Vernon Elementary School will be getting their toes wet on May 26-27th as part of a three part aquatic education series to teach students about the relationship between clean streams and lakes and healthy aquatic macroinvertebrate communities. The three part series began with a classroom visit on April 28th to teach the students about watersheds, ways to prevent pollution from entering our lakes and streams, and how scientists collect "bug" data to determine if our streams are healthy.

Last year, the project was offered to second graders to get them excited about natural science, and get them out of the classroom for a day of hands-on learning in their own backyard. The success of the program led to scaling the project up to two grades as a result of generous donations from several local businesses and organizations. This year, children from Deborah Hatt's 4th grade class and Leslie Boyce's 5th grade class built "bug samplers" that were deployed in streams and lakes around Mt. Vernon until they will be collected by the students. The bug samplers provide habitat for aquatic critters to move into over a four week period. Upon retrieval, the students will spend the morning documenting different habitat types, collecting their bug samplers, observing a Remote Operating Vehicle (ROV) demo on the bottom of Minnehonk Lake, and learning how to take water clarity measurements, before heading back to the classroom to sort and classify the macroinvertebrates in their samplers. Once in the classroom, students will sort, tally and chart their results to determine if there are differences in the bug communities among the different sites in the watershed. A third classroom visit on June 2nd will allow the students to creatively present their results through mixed media, using tablets, writing prompts, directing a play, or acting as reporters to present what they learned.

The "Bugs in the Classroom" project is part of the Maine Lakes Society's LakesAlive! program, and made possible by generous grants from By the Board Lumber Company in Mt. Vernon, the Onion Foundation, Greater Minnehonk Lake Association, Mt. Vernon Community Partnership Corporation, and the Maine Lakes Society with technical and programmatic support from Ecological Instincts.

For more information, visit the Maine Lakes Society's program offerings online: <http://mainelakessociety.org/> or contact Jennifer Jespersen at jen@ecoinstincts.com.

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