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**MOUNT VERNON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
3RD GRADERS ABOARD THE MAINE LAKES FLOATING CLASSROOM**

Mount Vernon, ME – On May 18th, third graders at Mount Vernon Elementary School will be heading out onto Great Pond in Belgrade aboard the Maine Lakes Society's *Melinda Ann*, a 30-foot pontoon boat outfitted with innovative instruments and hands-on activities that raise awareness, inspire wonder, and deepen knowledge of how lakes work. The LakesAlive! program is an innovative and award-winning lake education program that engages both children and adults in understanding and protecting Maine's lakes. Last year, the students participated in "Bugs in the Classroom," an introduction to lake and watershed ecology and the aquatic insects that help tell the story of lake health and how everything in the lake system is connected.

The students will learn how to measure water clarity, collect zooplankton and sediment samples from the lake bottom, and measure temperature and oxygen. A Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) with attached underwater camera allows the students to explore the dark and mysterious deepwater areas at the bottom of the lake. While half of the class is on the boat, the other half of the students will be immersed in land activities at the Maine Lakes Resource Center, including: collecting and identifying macroinvertebrates, conducting an invasive plant species boat inspection, nature observation, learning about the life-stages of fish, participating in a nature-inspired scavenger hunt, and making hypotheses about the filtering property of different soils. The day will finish up with an art activity in which kids will use what they've learned to create a large watershed mural that will be displayed at their school. The mural will also be featured at the 46th Annual Maine Lakes Conference at Unity College Center for the Performing Arts on June 25, 2016.

The LakesAlive! program is made possible by generous contributions from the Onion Foundation, Patagonia, and the Maine Lakes Society. Project support is provided by Ecological Instincts, the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance, and the Maine Lakes Resource Center.

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

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