

Meadows goes national

Vernon Morning Star - Published: April 18, 2009 12:00 PM

Literacy, a key focus across Canada, just took on a new dimension with the recent launching of the Meadows School Intergenerational Literacy Project.

The Meadows School Project, a seven-year initiative in Coldstream that brings Vernon School District students into immersion contact with seniors at Coldstream Meadows Retirement Community for eight weeks during the school year, has inspired a national model for intergenerational learning, and now adds an intergenerational literacy model.



Marie Firth (seated) with Lexus Shmyr, Jonathan Grant, Carly Alexander and Micah Tumlinson at the launch of the books produced through the Meadows School Project.

Senior participant Marie Firth, a prolific fiction author at Coldstream Meadows, has combined her talents with those of artistic Meadows School students from Grades 4 to 12, to create 10 fiction story books for children. The 10-book set was launched this month as a model for the rest of Canada. Linking their literacy interest to that of Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point, the children and Firth have created a set of books available as single books or at a reduced rate for the set. Books are for sale at Vernon Teach and Learn.

Over the next weeks, Firth will be visiting every library in the district to inform them how students can become published authors or illustrators with other generations. Proceeds from the book sales will go towards scholarships for promising artists or illustrators in Grade 12 who have been involved in intergenerational learning. The first such scholarship will be awarded this June by Firth.

The Meadows School Intergenerational Literacy Project grew out of the Meadows School Project which has received acclaim at local, provincial and national levels. The project will be fully functioning at Coldstream Meadows in September 2009 with students from Silver Star elementary. This September more than a dozen intergenerational Meadows School Projects will get under way in three provinces.

Sharon MacKenzie, teacher originator, was recently acknowledged for her work in community connectedness through presentation of the 2009 BC Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence. Her work has also been nominated for the Canada Molson Award. An intergenerational toolkit written by MacKenzie with the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport and BC Care Providers, will be available in a few weeks.

In May, MacKenzie will address the World Congress in Montreal on community based learning and intergenerational immersion. She is currently on her way to Saskatoon where seven schools have voiced interest in replicating the Meadows School Project, and on to Kingston and Ottawa for similar work.

The i2i Intergenerational Society acknowledges Spider Agile Technologies in Kelowna for their support. Check out the website at www.intergenerational.ca.