

Students, volunteers restore stretch of Lake Crystal Shoreline



Photo by Kristine Goodrich

Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial sixth-graders plant native plants at the Robinson Park beach Friday morning.

1,800 native seedlings planted to restore water quality

By Kristine Goodrich
kgoodrich@mankatofreepress.com

Over 60 sixth-graders helped plant marsh milkweed, blue flag iris and other native plants along the shore of Lake Crystal.

A handful of community volunteers and seniors from Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial Secondary School also helped restore a section of shoreline to what it might have looked like a century ago.

On Friday they inserted 1,800

native plant seedlings, each about 2-inches tall, under the direction of Dustin Demmer of Blazing Star Gardens.

The plants are aimed at reducing the amount of excess nutrients that reach the lake.

Or as sixth-grader Brianna Tauer explains it: “The roots soak up the bad stuff and help the water get cleaner.”

The plants also will help prevent erosion of the former beach at Robinson Park.

In decades past the shoreline was

a popular swimming beach. But as water quality has deteriorated, the beach has been largely abandoned, according to City Council member and Crystal Waters Project member Gina Cooper.

The lakeshore restoration is the latest endeavor of the Crystal Waters Project — a citizen group dedicated to improving the lake.

The \$10,000 project was funded by three sources: the city of Lake Crystal provided \$5,000, Crystal

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Waters Project contributed \$2,500 and an individual donor who wishes to remain anonymous chipped in \$2,500.

They hired Demmer, whose past projects include

the native garden at the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota.

City of Lake Crystal public works staff helped prepare the beach last week while a crew from Blazing Star Gardens installed a temporary

wake barrier and a biodegradable mesh that will help the plants take root.

Before they started planting Friday morning, the student helpers heard about prior efforts to restore the lake's water quality.

"We learned that they took out 2,700 pounds of carp," said sixth-grader Lucy Richards, adding that non-native carp steal native fish's food supply.

It will be a few years before the new shoreline

reaches its full beauty and environmental benefits, Demmer said. The only maintenance required will be a little weeding, he said.

Next the Crystal Waters Project and the Crystal Loon Lake Recreation Association

are working to bring a new public fishing pier to the park. The two organizations are starting to fundraise. Hewitt Docks in Nicollet has pledged to provide the pier at a discounted cost, Cooper said.