

## IN THE SCHOOLS: Students stretched by yoga class

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Jillian Didemus will go to the mat for her students ... literally.

The teacher at Forestview Elementary School has been a fan of yoga for a number of years.

While her experience was limited to the occasional class with some friends, she came across a study that detailed the benefits the ancient Indian practice can have on children.

As with adults, yoga can increase balance, flexibility and self-esteem in children.

The breathing exercises and relaxation techniques can also improve concentration and teach children how to relax and decrease stress.

Didemus decided to offer a yoga class to her grades 7 and 8 students.

"I thought I'd get maybe 10 students to come out," she said.

To her surprise, 35 students signed up for the class, including a good number of male students.

To launch the class, Didemus played a short video of a U.S. university football team that incorporates yoga into its regular training routine.

"It put a really fun twist on it and everyone seemed to love it," she said.

Then came the hard part.

The students quickly learned yoga isn't as easy as it looks.

"The students told how much fun they were having, although they admitted it was a lot harder than they thought it would be," Didemus said with a laugh.

The downward dog and trikonasana triangle poses were initially a challenge for football player Lucas Smith.

"I can touch my toes now. I couldn't do that before," the 14-year-old said proudly.

The Grade 8 student joined the yoga class because he felt it would benefit him on the playing field. "If I come here with sore muscles after training hard it relieves me," he said. "It has helped with my flexibility and has strengthened my muscles."

Yoga has also had a calming effect.

"I feel less hyper," Smith added with a laugh. "And teenagers can be really hyper sometimes."

Recently, Kate S. Durdan Public School hosted a yoga day for students.

The program was funded through a grant by the Education Foundation of Niagara.

"Schools make applications to the foundation for program enhancement funds, to provide funding for programs that wouldn't typically be funded by the Ministry of Education," said Julie Densham, EFN executive director.

In addition to supporting a yoga day, the fund has assisted schools with dance, swimming and Tai Chi classes.

"Our schools are offering a variety of things to diversify their healthy active lifestyle programs," Densham added.

Yoga is also used as an effective therapy for children with cerebral palsy, autism and developmental disabilities.

PAYING IT FORWARD

A group of Grade 12 students from A.N. Myer Secondary School has traded pens and pencils for pots and pans in support of Women's Place of South Niagara.

The group, called Myer Cares, is offering up baked goods for gently used books for the upcoming Nova House Book Riot.

The teens have issued a homeroom challenge, offering the winning homeroom a tray of goodies if they collect the most books.

Last year, more than 600 books were collected.

Students have also paired with students from Martha Cullimore Elementary School, which is running a similar program.

The 34th annual Book Riot will be held at the Optimist Club May 5 to 8.

#### TOP OF THE CLASS

Davis Gollert, a Grade 3 student at Valley Way Public School, recently earned high marks in a Canada-wide mathematics competition.

The Caribou Mathematics Competition is organized by the mathematics department at Brock University.

Davis placed 11th out of 1,042 grades 3 and 4 students from across Canada and first out of 110 District School Board of Niagara students. The competition is a free online contest that is open to all children in grades 3 through 8.

The goal of the project is to provide challenging math activities to show children that math can be fun and exciting.

#### SPRING CONCERT

The 24-member concert band at Stamford Collegiate will host a fundraising spring concert May 4.

The band was recently awarded the gold standard of excellence at a regional music festival held in Ancaster.

Along with the prestigious title, the band received an invitation to perform at MusicFest Canada's National Showcase in British Columbia in May.

The students are now spearheading a number of fundraisers to fund the trip.

The concert will be held at the Drummond Rd. school May 4 at 7:30 p.m. and will include performances by the concert band and the Jazz Connection Big Band from Hamilton. Joining them on stage will be internationally acclaimed jazz pianist John Sherwood, a native of St. Catharines.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors.

In the Schools is a weekly roundup of what's happening at schools in Niagara Falls and Fort Erie. Is there something happening in your school community? Contact Review reporter Alison Langley at [alangley@nfreview.com](mailto:alangley@nfreview.com) or call 905-358-5711, ext. 1131.

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