

Published in The Statesman Journal
Sunday, June 27, 2010
Front page, 'Arts & Life' section
(Page 1D)

Annual collection of essays, poems expands reach

Writing on rivers moves beyond the Willamette River

BY BARBARA CURTIN
Statesman Journal

For too many local adults, the Willamette River is a barrier to be crossed on the way to work. The young poets and essayists chosen for "Honoring Our Rivers: 2010" see much more.

To Madeline Bielby, a second-grader at Forest Ridge Elementary in Keizer, "River is home" to "the

rascally raccoon ... the stinking skunk ... the sneaky wolf."

Madelyn Hurst, a third-grader at the same school, notices how "Salamanders hide in deep crevices of huge rocks."

Elizabeth Mendez, a seventh-grader at Jane Goodall Environmental Middle School, imagines how she wants her grandchildren to see the river: "It will be almost white because of how clean it is. Even the rocks will be colors that make them seem surreal."

They are among dozens

of students from 23 elementary, middle and high schools and colleges featured in the 10th anniversary edition of "Honoring Our Rivers." The anthology publishes students' poems, essays, photographs and drawings on the theme of how rivers connect us all.

The project began in 2000 at the prompting of several Salem-Keizer teachers. Until this year, the focus was the Willamette River; the title was "Honoring Our River"

See 'Rivers,' 6D

At a glance

WHAT: "Honoring Our Rivers 2010," a student anthology collected from the Willamette River watershed and beyond

SPONSORS: Eugene Water and Electric Board, Wildwood/Mahonia, Portland General Electric, the Willamette Partnership, SOLV, KP Corp., The Freshwater Trust and Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative

AVAILABLE: At local libraries



or (free) by e-mailing info@honoringourriver.org

CELEBRATION: Contributors will read from 4 to 5 p.m. July 25 at Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside, Portland.

JOB OPPORTUNITY:

Publishers are seeking a part-time project manager/marketing coordinator with skills in writing, editing and environmental education. E-mail travis@wildwoodco.com.

ONLINE: www.honoringourriver.org

'Rivers'

Continued from 1D

and the contributors came mainly from the river's watershed.

This year, the field broadened to include entrants from Peru, China, Russia and Japan. That's because of the international contacts of Salem's John Miller, whose Wildwood/Mahonia urban design and vineyard companies are major sponsors of the anthology.

He got to know teachers

in China while working on dam and native plant nursery projects there. His stepdaughter, Jennifer Harris, sent work from the Amazon community where she is co-pastor of a church.

In response to the wider scope, this year's volume acquired an extra "s" — "Honoring Our Rivers."

"It was a natural evolution," Miller said. "It's amazing how many common threads we find in writing and art from all around the world."

The volunteers who sift through piles of submissions include acclaimed

Oregon philosopher and nature writer Kathleen Dean Moore.

"I asked her to be a judge, and she gladly volunteered," Miller said. Moore's work appears in the journal, along with pieces by such well-known writers as Ursula K. Le Guin, Barry Lopez and Ellen Waterston.

Laurie Aguirre, who teaches second grade and serves as environmental coordinator for Forest Ridge Elementary in Keizer, said that "Honoring Our Rivers" plays a vital part in her lessons. Students go outdoors to test

what they've learned in class; they reflect on their knowledge in assignments for the journal; and they use "Honoring Our Rivers" for research the following year.

"It is this great opportunity for them to be published," Aguirre said. "To you or I, this might not seem like such a big thing, but they are hugging these books as they go home, and their parents have such pride. I wish we could expand the anthology to have even more."

bcurtin@statesmanjournal.com
or (503) 399-6699