

**In The Schools column**



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Anti-smoking crusaders urge students to butt out

## In The Schools: Anti-smoking crusaders urge students to butt out

By ALISON LANGLEY Niagara Falls Review  
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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.

### BUTT OUT

Mention cigarettes to Serena Siciliano and Samantha Piercy and both girls instantly make a face.

"They cause lung cancer," 10-year-old Serena said with disgust.

"...and wrinkles, and turn your teeth and nails yellow," Samantha, also 10, added.

While the two anti-smoking crusaders realize they can do little to get smokers to quit, they are trying their best to encourage young people to never start.

The girls, together with classmates in the Grade 4/5 class at Valley Way Public School, recently designed custom-made bracelets that features the name of a website where people can pledge to live smoke free.

The website, [www.pledgebank.com/smoke-free](http://www.pledgebank.com/smoke-free), allows users to 'sign' a petition and promise not to smoke.

"Our goal is to have as many Niagara kids as we can sign our online pledge," said teacher Kerrie Taylor.

The students have shared their mission with friends and family, and Samantha recently delivered a presentation at the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara.

The young advocates have shared the dangers of smoking, both on your health and your wallet.

"You'll be broke because you'll spend all your money," Serena said.

"If you quit smoking, you'll probably have enough money to buy a new TV within a month."

The kids also sent bracelets to F.J. Rutland Elementary School, which participates in a pen pal project with the Valley Way school.

The class plans to distribute the red bracelets throughout the city in an effort to spread the message that smoking kills.

The class was able to bring their project to fruition after Taylor applied for a Niagara Region Tobacco Awareness Grant.

The region's public health department awards grants to local schools in support of student-led tobacco prevention and awareness campaigns.

Grant funding is meant to prevent and reduce smoking among youth by directly engaging them as key participants in their chosen initiatives.



Serena Siciliano and Samantha Piercy, Grade 5 students at Valley Way Public School, display some of the bracelets they helped to design to encourage young people not to take up smoking.

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"This is a great way to get kids involved in an issue that is very important to them," Taylor added.

Anyone interested in a set of bracelets for a classroom, or anyone who supports the kids' mission, can call Taylor at the school at 905-356-6611. The online pledge will remain open until April 30.

According to the Health Story of Niagara, 30% of adults in Niagara use tobacco products.

Smoking and other forms of tobacco use remain the largest cause of preventable death and disease in Ontario. It kills 13,000 Ontarians each year.

#### WESTLANE ROBOTICS SCORES SECOND GOLD

Today Toronto, tomorrow the world!

Spartonics Team 1503 from Westlane Secondary School will be heading to St. Louis at the end of the month to compete against 400 other teams in a world robotics championships.

In March, the 32-member team took the gold medal at a regional competition in Pittsburgh. Earlier this month, it competed against 36 teams from across North America at a Toronto competition and earned a second gold medal.

"The excitement level is just amazing," Ted Clark, Westlane teacher and team leader, said of the competitions.

The program is called FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics and competitions are held around the world over a five-week period.

Each year students are presented a different game scenario and each team has six weeks to design and build a robot from scratch.

"I have had a lot of fun and it has been a great learning experience," said Melissa Middlestadt, a 17-year-old Grade 12 student at the Pitton Rd. high school.

"Our team is split up into different divisions and everyone has a different role based on what they like. Everyone has contributed to the robot in some way."

To check out Westlane's robot in action, visit [www.spartonics.org](http://www.spartonics.org).

#### WHO IS NOBODY?

Turning a Nobody into a somebody resulted in Reptile Kingdom paying a visit to the Greendale Gators.

Recently, students in Katie Lagerwerf's Grade 4 class at Greendale Public School launched a Who is Nobody project.

The unique program is designed to fuel a student's passion to help others and to support positive character traits.

The classroom receive a blue "Nobody" doll. The doll has no gender, age, ethnicity or values.

The goal is to turn Nobody into a somebody by giving it positive life experiences.

Each student took Nobody home for a week and they had decide on a living thing - such as a person or animal - that they want to help change or make a positive influence on.

Students then organized a social justice project in support of their Nobody.

"This program has helped these nine and ten year olds become global citizens," Lagerwerf said.

Their attitudes, she said, shifted from 'How can I make my life better', to 'How can I make the lives of others better?'

Jamie Huggins, for example, focussed her Nobody on animal welfare.

She set up a table in the school hallway and sold necklaces as well as ballots for students to guess how much candy was in a jar.

She also invited Thorold's Reptile Kingdom to do a presentation for the school and students donated \$1 to get up close and personal with snakes and lizards as well as scorpions and tarantulas.

All told, Jamie raised over \$600 in support of Reptile Kingdom.

Lagerwerf is proud of her students' accomplishments.

"They have become change agents, and I am hopeful that the differences they have made and have observed, will ripple out and that they will hold on to the lessons they have learned this year through this program, even if it means forgetting some of the math I taught," she joked.

#### FASHION SHOW AT MYER

A.N. Myer Secondary School will hold a fashion show Thursday at 7 p.m. in the school gym.



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## DAY OF PINK

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is challenging educators to do everything they can to make schools safe for all students.

The call comes as schools, communities, and workplaces around the world mark the International Day against Bullying, Discrimination and Homophobia - or Day of Pink - on Wednesday.

"We know that embracing diversity and respect for others are learned behaviours," said ETFO President Sam Hammond.

"That means that educators at both elementary and secondary levels have a tremendous opportunity to create a climate where bullying, discrimination and homophobia are not tolerated."

The first Day of Pink was held in Nova Scotia in 2007 after two students heard about a male student who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt.

They encouraged fellow students to wear pink to take a stand against bullying.

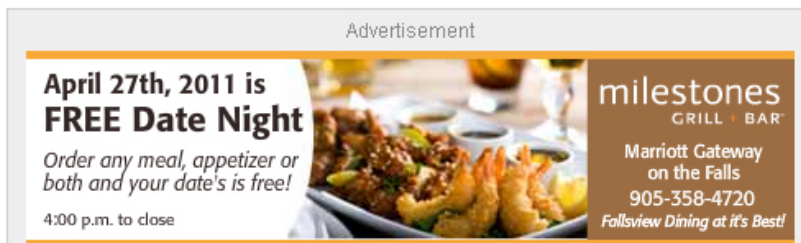
## NIAGARA NOT AFFECTED BY U.S. BUS RECAL

A recall of 3,900 school buses does not affect buses that transport Niagara children to and from school.

Earlier this month, the Blue Bird Corporation in the U.S. recalled its 2004-6 Vision model due to possible fire concerns.

Niagara Student Transportation Services, which is used by both the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board to transport 32,000 students per year, does not use that style of vehicle.

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