

Rainy day project



JOED VIERA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students in Rich Meyers' environmental science class at Newfane High School are constructing rain water collection barrels to distribute to community members. From left are Brenna Mendola, Haley Dranger, Lauryn Randall, Casey Gilson, Patrick Matalavage (red shirt), Ian Rizzo, Austin Thomas, Kyle Payne, Kyle Simmons, and Rich Meyers.



Students Ian Rizzo, left, and Patrick Matalavage saw lengths of pipe for the rain barrels they're making.

Newfane students take on rain barrel construction for community

BY KALEY LYNCH
kaley.lynych@lockportjournal.com

NEWFANE — Students in Rich Meyers' environmental science classes are used to doing hands-on work in the classroom to learn about the environment and conservation.

For the past few years, students have raised trout

in the classroom and released them into Lake Ontario, as well as conduct sampling of water quality in the Olcott Marina and Eighteen Mile Creek. Last May, they installed tubes to collect used fishing line at the marina and Fisherman's Park in Burt.

This semester, the students have been designing



Brenna Mendola and Casey Gilson fit a water spout on a rain barrel. Garden hose can be attached to the spout for watering gardens.

and building rain barrels to collect rainwater runoff from gutters.

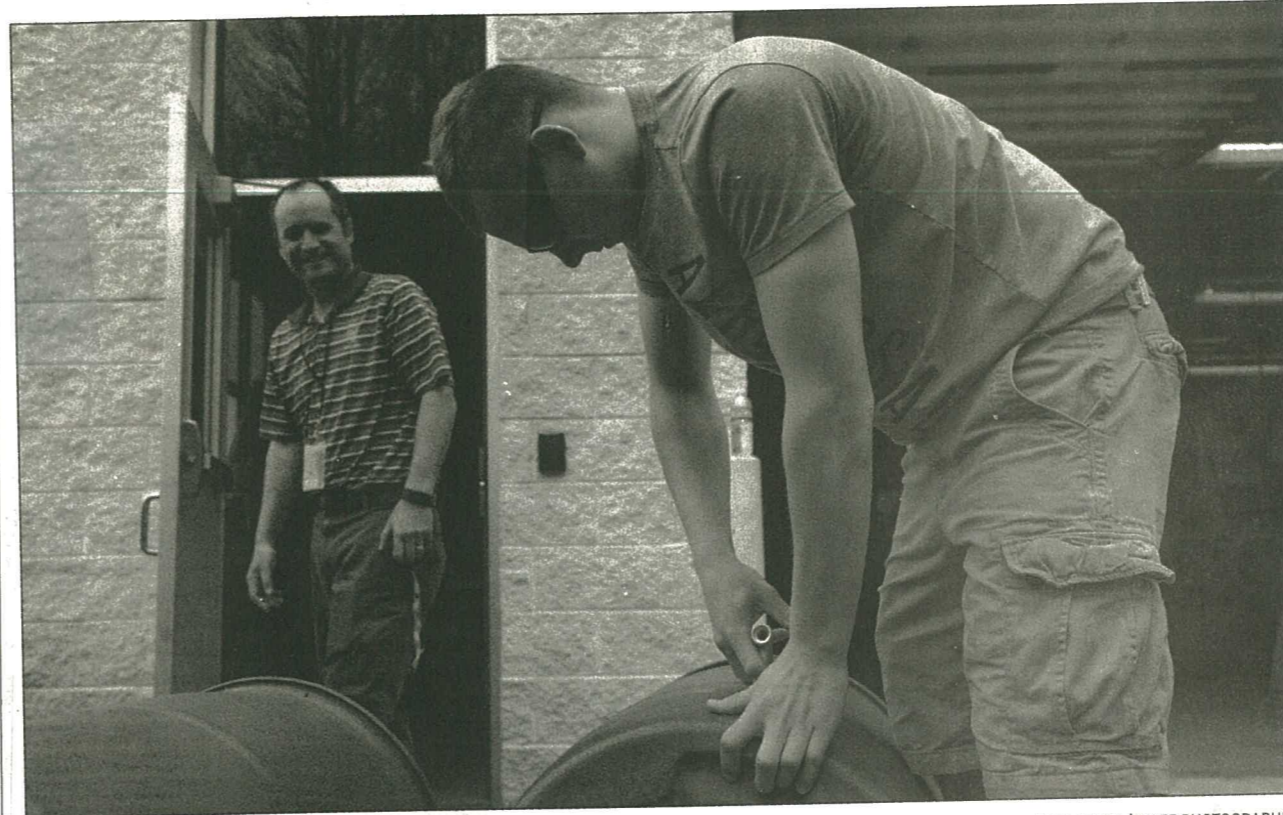
The barrels serve a dual purpose: Preventing

rainwater from spilling out of gutters and collecting sediment, salt and other pollutants before they slip

See **BARREL**, Page 5A

www.lockportjournal.com

NEWS



JOED VIERA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Newfane High School student Austin Thomas fits a water spout on a rain barrel under the watchful eye of environmental science teacher Rich Meyers.

BARREL...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

into stormwater drains and the water system. Rain barrels also give homeowners a free source of fresh water for plants and gardens.

"The whole idea was to do a project that gets the community more active in protecting their local watershed," Meyers said.

Meyers' 2015-2016 environmental science class, composed of seniors and juniors, selected the rain barrels project from a list of several options.

"We talked about some of the things that might affect the creek: fish consumption issues, pollution," Meyers said.

The class has constructed five rain barrels to date. According to junior Casey Gilson, each one holds about 50 gallons of rainwater and it comes equipped with a water spout, which can be connected to a hose, and a mechanism to allow overflow.

The barrels will be given away to interested residents on one mild condition.

"We just want to know how people are going to use it, and if they'll be using the water for a nearby garden," Meyers said.

Anyone interested in acquiring one of the rain barrels can email Meyers at rmeyers@newfane.wnryic.org.

The barrels are relatively easy to make. Supplies can be

acquired locally at Flint Brothers Hardware on Main Street.

Meyers' class will compose and distribute construction directions at several local businesses and organizations, including Singer Farms Naturals in Appleton, where a rain barrel will be displayed, perhaps to plant a seed of thought with customers. Farm store owner Tom Szulist says he thinks "it's a great project."

Rain collection is part of permaculture, a system of agricultural principles centered around using the patterns and features found in natural ecosystems.

"Rain is an asset, and to collect it and use it promotes sustainability," Szulist said.

Collected rainwater is clean

and ideal for using on crops and flowers, he added.

"It's healthier for plants because it hasn't been held in lakes and had chlorine added."

Environmental science classes at Newfane work with GM Green, General Motors' environmental education network, EarthForce, and the Niagara County Soil and Water District on projects to protect Niagara County's waterways.

Scott Collins, remedial action coordinator for the soil and water district, said schools come up with their own projects to help their local environments.

"Hopefully the rain barrels can be put somewhere they can be used," he said.