

BOZEMAN DAILY

# CHRONICLE

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COM

## Spraying awareness

Area youth pick up spray paint, stencils to help keep Bozeman Creek clean



ADRIAN SANCHEZ-GONZALEZ/CHRONICLE

Kaitlyn Reilmann, 14, left, fist bumps Kyle Mehrens of Bozeman Public Works after painting a storm drain stencil at the corner of Tracy Avenue and Curtiss Street in Bozeman on Saturday.

By **JOLENE KELLER**  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Typically, instructing area youths in the art of spray-painting city property would be frowned upon. But that's exactly what went down this weekend on the streets of downtown Bozeman.

Only, it wasn't an act of vandalism, but rather an effort to raise awareness about urban runoff issues in Bozeman Creek.

The Greater Gallatin Watershed Council (GGWC), in partnership with the City of Bozeman and the Big Sky Youth Empowerment (BYEP), hit the pavement on Saturday and Sunday, stenciling storm drain inlets throughout downtown Bozeman with the logo, "No Dumping, Drains to Bozeman Creek."

Bozeman public service technician Kyle Mehrens is well-versed in the ins and outs of the Bozeman storm-water system and worked with the GGWC and the BYEP high-schoolers on the public-awareness project.

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— **Kyle Mehrens**, Bozeman public service technician

man Creek," Mehrens said. "Basically, if you don't want to swim in it, don't put it down the drain."

Bozeman City officials also took an interest in the stenciling project.

"This is about the recognition that clean water in our waterways is our lifeblood, and what makes this place fantastic," said Bozeman City Manager Chris Kukulski Sunday morning as he watched BYEP members stencil the last of the drains. "As a headwaters community, clean water is one of the things people consider when they think of Bozeman and Gallatin County, so we want to make sure we're improving the situation as Bozeman continues to expand."

While community leaders, including Bozeman Mayor Sean Becker, made appearances on Sunday to check out the project's progress, it was the BYEP members' enthusiasm that

kept the work steaming along through the quiet neighborhood intersections.

BYEP participant Summer Robinson, a soon-to-be sophomore at Belgrade High School, was busy with her stenciling crew on Sunday morning, putting the finishing touches on the project that labeled approximately 100 drains, some of which were stenciled with a custom design created by local artist Catalin Corrigan.

"Before we got started with the actual stenciling, we learned that the drains go right to the creek, and everyone I've talked to about the water going into the creek had no idea that was happening," Robinson said. "This has been a really fun project; legal tagging as street art is pretty cool. And, a local artist benefitting the community with art is admirable."

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As part of the project, BYEP students learned that known pollutants entering Bozeman Creek via storm-water runoff include dog waste, fertilizers and cleaning products.

"We basically gave these kids the information, and

they're running with it," Mehrens said. "They're drivers of change and aren't afraid to speak up about the issue."

Funding for the project, which GGWC coordinator Sierra Harris said cost just under \$900, came from a grant GGWC received from the Montana Department of Environmental

Quality. Additional funding and supplies were also provided by BYEP and the City of Bozeman.

"This has been a really great project," Harris said. "As an organization, we don't get to work with kids. And it was great to work with the city, we really couldn't have done it without them."