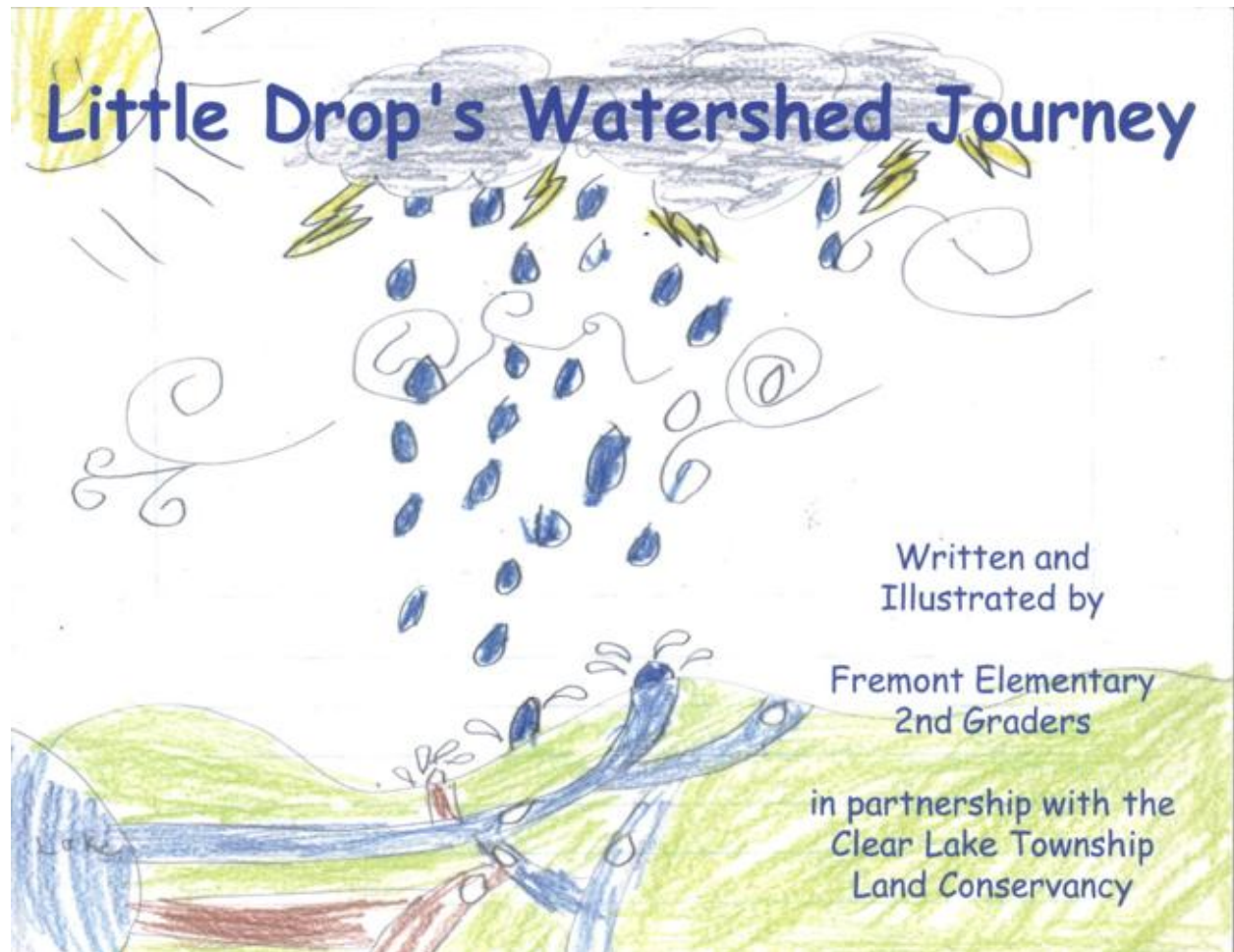


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Fremont Elementary second-graders author, illustrate book

By Caitlynn Shipe hrintern@kpcmedia.com

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This is the cover of “Little Drop’s Watershed Journey” created by Fremont Elementary School second graders, working with the experts at Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy. The book was unveiled on May 19.

Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy

FREMONT — Fremont Elementary School second-graders have been hard at work writing and illustrating “Little Drop’s Watershed Journey.”

In a partnership with the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy, the students learned about watersheds through a variety of hands-on activities.



Bridget Harrison and Tracy Hughes of the Conservancy first visited the four classrooms in April, where they gave lessons to the students. Throughout the three visits made by the duo, the second-graders had enough knowledge of their school's own watershed to create the book.

Although their work came to fruition, Harrison and Hughes have had a much lengthier process getting the book to come full circle.

"We've had this idea since last year and I'd say since January we've been planning for it," Hughes said. "We did the water quality lessons and then we made the kids into writers so we could showcase what they learned. The whole idea is that they can take this book home and share what they learned with their families."

During the series of classroom visits, the Conservancy pair taught the second-graders about watersheds through small projects and physical activities.

Using paper and markers, students created makeshift watersheds with the paper and marked them. Then the elementary schoolers sprayed each with water and watched how the markers bled.

The other primary activity was a chalk maze. The maze demonstrated positive and negative encounters water can have throughout its watershed journey. Students acted as water droplets as they explored the maze. Along the way, they either came across pollutants that dirtied the water or they passed through rain gardens that cleaned the water.

"We definitely had to make these lessons more hands-on than we do for the older ones. We just wanted it to be fun and creative," Hughes said.

Harrison and Hughes used a shared writing experience to help the students author their 13-page story. During this process, the pair would write on chart paper when working with the students. Due to the book being a shared product among the four second-grade classes, each room helped with a different section of the book.

While the students were given direction, they still had opportunities to share and customize numerous elements of their collaborative story.



“They had the freedom and flexibility to share ideas to create different pollutants the water droplets might run into and create different scenarios where it might get clean. It was really their guided writing in a group setting with (Hughes) writing it up on the chart paper,” Harrison said.

On Thursday the duo shared the printed version of the book with the students. The reading was met with laughter, cheering and applause from the second-graders as they enjoyed popsicles in the outside pavilion. After Harrison and Hughes read the book, all 78 students were provided with their own copies.

For a personalized touch, “Little Drop’s Watershed Journey” includes references to Fremont and Indiana topography such as Snow Lake, Jimmerson Lake, farmlands, the Indiana Toll Road, Marsh Lake Wetlands, South Bend and Lake Michigan.

To reflect a large portion of the second-graders, Hughes and Harrison edited together different illustrations in the book. Some pictures include elements from three different artists.

“We wanted these to be awesome pictures so we just had to piece them together and it created more representation in the book,” Hughes said.

Copies of the book were also distributed to Fremont Elementary School’s library and the Fremont Public Library.

“Education is a big part of our mission (at the Conservancy) and we’re lucky we’re in such close proximity to Fremont and they’re so welcoming to us coming into the classroom in the high school, middle school and elementary school,” Harrison said. “We’re definitely open to opportunities like this in the future. It was such a rewarding experience I know for us; it seemed like the kids were engaged.”

