OYC awarded $1,500 to Sound Salmon Solutions' "Watershed Detectives" program for approximately 175 students.

Under the guidance of Chris Pyper and Andy Noone, the program invited seven 4th-5th grade classrooms to provide quality outdoor adventure and science education. In an increasingly test-centric school environment, students have fewer and fewer opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. This program provides science curriculum which students love because the lessons are fun and exciting.

Students learn about the components of a healthy salmon habitat and how to help ensure healthy salmon runs for future generations. The program improves the basic awareness and familiarity environmental concepts such as ecosystems, habitat, erosion, and water quality.

Students are challenged to answer the question: "how do trees affect erosion?"

After learning the foundations of scientific inquiry, students investigate their testable questions. They construct an erosion models using clay (representing bed rock), sand (representing glacial till) and potting soil (representing soil). One model has toothpicks inserted through all three layers to represent trees and the other model does not. The students form hypotheses, discuss results, and the real world benefit of trees.

During the hands-on field trip, students visit one of Sound Salmon Solutions' active restoration sites and plant native trees and shrubs. Each student has the unique opportunity to make a difference at a nearby stream in their local community, which empowers the student's awareness to increase their sense of stewardship.

In addition, the students conduct water quality testing. The water is tested for temperature, turbidity, dissolved oxygen and phosphate levels. Students learn the interconnection of these measurements with human actions and habitat quality, as well as the significance to salmon and the greater ecosystem. Students also learn specific actions that they can take to improve water quality.