**2015 Houghton Middle School 'Mad-Stamping Gremlins' team wins 1st round of National Lexus EcoChallenge!**

The 2015 Houghton Middle School EcoChallenge team, the 'Mad-Stamping Gremlins', has one the first round of the National Lexus EcoChallenge, announced their coach, Sarah Geborkoff, science teacher at Houghton Middle School. The team has won $10,000 and the right to continue in round two.

This means back-to-back wins for Houghton Middle School. The 2014 HMS EcoChallenge team won last year for their project about educating the community on the impact of invasive species.

“The Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative (LSSI) has been a major force in generating interest, background information, and ideas for our projects. It all started with LSSI!” exclaims Geborkoff.

As part of the Lexus Scholastic Eco Challenge, students identify a local ecology issue then create and implement an action plan for addressing it which they present via a power point format to the judges.

The 2015 Houghton Middle School EcoChallenge team, the 'Mad-Stamping Gremlins', is comprised of ten 8th graders who "care about our local water sources that have been polluted by old copper mines. Stamp sands are one of the most well-known by products of stamp mills in the Copper Country. Stamp mills are known to leave leftover coarse sand from processing ore; this is called stamp sand. We want to stop chemicals such as arsenic that comes from heavy metals found in stamp sand from entering our water and threatening vegetation and wildlife” as explained on the student webpage.

The 2015 HMS action plan is:

1. To educate ourselves about the effects of copper-rich stamp sand on aquatic life.
2. To educate other youth through a school-wide event that will allow us to teach others about this problem and involve them in our project.
3. To determine if and where high copper levels exist in water on school property through water chemistry testing.
4. To design and conduct our own experiments with phytoremediation of copper from contaminated soil using plants to remove the copper contaminants.
5. To monitor the success of our work (plant survival, spreading the word) and establish an annual planting event at our school.

View the team website & student-created video tutorials (used at school-wide event presentations): [http://hmsstampingmadgremlins.weebly.com/#/](http://hmsstampingmadgremlins.weebly.com/#/)

On 10/2/15, students shared their project with Houghton elementary students and engaged each 4th grade class in the planting of their own trays of bluestem. Each class has pledged to transplant their bluestem on school property. We broke our team into two groups and traveled to different classrooms! The Daily Mining Gazette covered our event and the article made front page of the weekend edition!

On 10/13/15, students traveled to share our project with students at neighboring EB Holman school, engaging students as well as school administrators and educators in the same presentation and hands-on bluestem activity.

Students educated the Houghton–Portage Township board and created a hand out for display at school events.

Students created a website complete with videos they created instructing viewers on phytoremediation and how to plant bluestem. The website was used for each presentation of the project, and shared on the school Facebook site as well as by the local newspaper, The Daily Mining Gazette.

To view the powerpoint submitted by the Mad-Stamping Gremlins, please visit: [https://docs.google.com/a/houghton.k12.mi.us/presentation/d/1PmfkZOwWgIzzC1617UJM0t7hg1wInngj8WWPq3_rJdQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/a/houghton.k12.mi.us/presentation/d/1PmfkZOwWgIzzC1617UJM0t7hg1wInngj8WWPq3_rJdQ/edit?usp=sharing)