
Oyston wins Moraine Hero Award

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NORTHUMBERLAND — In a telephone interview from Ethiopia, 2012 Moraine Hero Award winner John Oyston talked about his winning project with Northumberland Today.

Oyston, along with four other individuals with property within the Oak Ridges Moraine, was honoured by the Monitoring the Moraine Partners (MMP), EcoSpark and Storm Coalition. The awards have been given out since 2006.

"The 2012 Heroes represent the power that an individual has to have a large and positive impact on the Oak Ridges Moraine," states the release.

Project manager Joyce Chau, MMP at EcoSpark, put us in touch with Oyston who is currently taking part in a collaboration with the Universities of Toronto and Addis Ababa (the capitol city of Ethiopia), to teach anesthesiology in that country.

Oyston was selected for the Hero award because he transformed a hayfield on the former Rice Lakes Plains into a tallgrass prairie encircled by an arboretum with 120 different kinds and species of trees.

"I started five years ago," Oyston said.

After purchasing 100 acres of land on Oak Ridges Road north of the Bewdley transfer station off County Road 9 in Hamilton Township, Oyston turned 35 acres of bush into a trail system, rented about 60 to a local farmer for agricultural production and three of the five remaining acres he restored to tallgrass prairie where there is a high view of Rice Lake.

This was once part of the Rice Lake Plains covered by prairie grasses but all over North America this vegetation has become very rare, he said.

Among the types of vegetation that once covered the area and that Oyston replanted was Indian grass, black-eyed Susan and bee balm.

The announcement was made to coincide with Earth Day celebrations, the release stated.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan is part of a provincial initiative to preserve important parts of the area's ecosystems which helps protect Drinking Water and wildlife habitat in Ontario.

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