

MEDIA RELEASE

New technology in the classroom helps expose effects of UV radiation

Guelph, May 26, 2010

If a picture is worth a thousand words, local high school students have a lot to talk about. The cosmetology and parenting classes at College Heights in Guelph and Orangeville District Secondary School are seeing the effects of ultra violet (UV) radiation on their own skin using a new software program. Mirror Software highlights a student's skin surface features—including colour, freckling and age spots—to reveal possible areas of underlying skin damage.

“We know through the tanning process UV radiation can damage skin,” says Beth Watters, health promotion specialist at WDG Public Health. “Similarly, most freckling occurs in sun-exposed areas of the body, like the hands and face, so there could likely be underlying damage in those areas. The software helps identify areas that may have been damaged from UV radiation and should especially be protected.”

Student volunteers provide digital head shots to their teacher who uploads them to the software program. The program enhances the photos and allows the class to see differences in the surface areas most susceptible to damage.

“Students are very interested to see what their faces look like using the software,” says Robb Mayer, cosmetology teacher at College Heights. “But more importantly, they understand that while a little bit of sun is good, the UV rays from a lot of sun or artificial tanning damages the skin below the surface. We've got quite a few newly-committed sunscreen users after participating in the lesson.”

The software is part of a pilot program organized by WDG Public Health and funded by the Wellington Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Network. Following evaluation, the group hopes to expand the project to include more schools in the fall.

For more information about the pilot program call WDG Public Health--1-800-265-7293 ext. 4658.

-30-

Contact:

Beth Watters
Health Promotion Specialist
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
519-846-2715 ext. 4658