

Cameron business owner wants to feed community's needs during coronavirus crisis

Catherine Whitnall

Santosh Patel's community project could easily be called a "GrowFundMe" campaign.

The Fenelon Falls resident has launched an initiative to help feed the community by providing vegetables in potted containers.

Patel took over ownership of Rockwood Forest Nurseries just one week before the outbreak of COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11.

Wanting to find a way to combine his new business with a way to help those in need, Patel thought offering the container gardens would fit the bill.

He has received support from local construction companies W.G. Jackett and Sons Construction and Young's Construction Limited, as well as the Farm Credit Corporation to get started. Donations to the GoFundMe campaign will help cover the cost of pots, soil, seeds, labour, cold frames and delivery.

"Our goal is to pot a minimum of 100,000 containers, but with a target of 200,000 containers, starting in early April, with availability for 'zero-contact' distribution by June," states Patel.

The plan is to grow and pot a variety vegetables, including carrots, eggplant, green and yellow beans, kale, lettuce, red and green peppers, peas, and tomatoes. These potted food sources will then be provided to seniors and underprivileged households in the Kawartha Lakes and surrounding communities at no cost.

"We're looking to give those in need two-and-a-half pots per resident, per household," said Patel. "With a little luck and good weather, people will have a safe, sustainable source of fresh vegetables right at their fingertips."

Any extra funds raised through the campaign will be donated to the Ross Memorial Hospital and Peterborough Regional Health Centre for their front-line efforts.

Anyone wishing to support Patel's efforts are invited to visit https://www.gofundme.com/f/covid-19-feeding-our-community-kawarthas?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link-tip&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet.