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TAKING SHAPE: The new Rockwood Medical Centre on Alma St. is beginning to take shape. Construction should be complete by December. - *Rebecca Ring Photo*

Heritage Tree program gets Parks Dept. support

By *Rebecca Ring*

An Ontario-wide program to identify heritage trees across the province was implemented this summer by Trees Ontario. The Heritage Tree program celebrates those trees that have cultural or historical significance to the community or province.

Guelph/Eramosa Parks Department supports the idea. Manager Robin Milne says it offers a great opportunity to highlight the importance of trees in the township. Residents are invited to identify special trees in the community or neighbourhoods that would be worth nominating as a Heritage Tree.

"This is a great idea," says Mayor Chris White, "There are trees in the Rockwood Conservation Area that are over 500 years old - they were saplings during the reign of King Henry VIII. It's an incredible thing to think about - they were here long before the European settlers arrived." He adds that the program ties in nicely with the Township's declaration to increase the tree coverage, as it would protect

trees that are already mature. "It's important to bring our heritage as a community to light and highlight those features of which not everyone is aware, like the Group of Seven painting that was done here," he says.

Anyone can nominate a tree by registering on the Trees Ontario Heritage Tree website (www.heritagetrees.on.ca). A nominated tree is evaluated by a Trees Ontario representative based on the following characteristics: its historical and cultural importance to the local and broader community; rarity of species; prominence based on size and age; aesthetics or artistic peculiarity; its physical condition and expected longevity.

If the tree is approved, it will be recognized with a certificate and placed into the Heritage Trees online database.

A Heritage Tree is usually more than 70 years old. What sets them apart is the important cultural and historical significance they represent. "If these trees could talk, they could provide an in-

triguing history lesson about the people and land around which they are rooted," says Michael G. Scott, President and CEO, Trees Ontario. "For the communities and people that enjoy, celebrate and nurture these green giants, they are a source of pride, full of rich memories and stories that they can now share."

The Ontario Urban Forest Council's (OUFC) Heritage Tree Toolkit formed the basis for the Trees Ontario Heritage Tree program. "The toolkit was developed in response to the public's interest in identifying heritage trees in the community," says Jack Radecki, Executive Director, OUFC. "OUFC is thrilled to be working with Trees Ontario to launch the online provincial program."

"We are pleased to be working with OUFC to extend their Heritage Tree Toolkit into a province-wide program available to the public," adds Scott, "We look forward to receiving nominations from across the province and reading wonderful stories about important trees." For more information on Trees Ontario and the Heritage Tree Program, visit www.heritagetrees.on.ca.



Improve playground

Guelph/Eramosa Council approved a budget amendment to pay one-third of the cost of replacing a swing set and resurfacing the playground at Rockmosa Park. The other two-thirds will come from Recreational Infrastructure Canada Funding (RinC) as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan.

RinC provided \$25,514 and the Township transferred \$12,757 from its Parks and Recreation Reserves, leaving a balance in the Parks Reserves of \$13,330.57.

Currently, the play area is surfaced with wood mulch. It will be replaced by a rubberized surface. "This will be cleaner and allow for greater accessibility," says Mayor Chris White. It will also solve the problem of mulch getting into the filters of the splash pad. The new swing set will be located closer to the splash pad, better integrating the entire play area. White says construction should begin this fall.

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