

Community gardening concept gains ground

GOOD TO KNOW

Vaughan's Fire & Rescue firefighters are presenting a two-day car wash fundraiser at the Promenade Mall in Thornhill, this Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to support the community garden at the Thornhill fire hall (Bathurst and Clark).

Bring your dirty vehicles to The Promenade mall parking lot, just south of the LCBO, close to Bathurst, where firefighters and Seeds For Change volunteers will wash your cars for donations.

For more information, visit seedsforchangegardens.org.

Volunteers of all ages are needed from spring to late fall to tend, harvest and plant the LadyBug Treat Garden at Stately Way (Romfield Circuit and Bayview Avenue) in Thornhill.

If interested, send an e-mail to shauna@seedsforchangegardens.org for more information.

BY KIM ZARZOUR
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Seeds for Change has thrown down the gauntlet, or more accurately, the spade and hoe.

The grassroots group that fosters community gardens vows to create 2,015 new garden plots in York Region by the year 2015 in time for the Pan Am games — and is challenging other regions to do the same.

The first garden was launched earlier this month at Seedlings Child Care Centre in Thornhill.

Organizer Lynne Koss hopes it will be the first of many to be created in collaboration with York Region Food Network, HealthYork, Heart and Stroke, Town of Markham, United Way and York Region Public Health.

The initiative follows a similar challenge launched by Vancouver city council in 2006 to create 2,010 new food-producing plots as a 2010 Olympics legacy. The challenge was met and exceeded by the beginning of that year.

The city of London, England has similar plans for the 2012 summer Olympics, with plans to identify unused space across the capital for 2,012 new gardens to grow local produce.

Through a variety of hands-on workshops, the Seedlings garden will teach children about planting,

harvesting and giving; a portion of the food will be donated to the local food bank, Ms Koss said.

Seedlings director Jill Ferney hopes it will provide lessons on nutrition, sustainability, ecology, teamwork and that thorniest of all challenges — how to get toddlers to try, and like, new vegetables.

The second food-producing garden is at Thornhill's fire hall at Bathurst and Clark streets.

The fire hall has five beds under cultivation and plans to expand to 15, including one that will be wheelchair accessible. The project has been multicultural and multi-generational, Ms Koss said, with gardeners ranging in age from 3 to 80.

"This was completely under-utilized land there beside the parking lot and now it's a vibrant part of the community."

She said the project is being used as a template for other fire halls in municipalities in York.

A third York Region garden opening was held May 17 in the back yard at Pathways for Children, Youth and Families residential group home in Markham.

Others are lined up for Richmond Hill and 22 plots are being added to the Newmarket community garden.

Joan Stonehocker, York Region Food Network's executive director, said her group is encouraging



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Isaac Ross and his friends from Thornhill's Seedlings Child Care Centre enjoy digging in to a community garden effort. Plans are to create 2,015 new garden plots across York Region by the year 2015.

the Town of Newmarket to create a community garden in each ward by 2018.

Food-producing plots make communities healthier, she said, because products don't lose their nutrition they are picked and eaten right away — gardening requires physical activity and community plots allow gardeners to get to know neighbours and share techniques.

New back yard gardens are also included in the 2015 challenge. Ms Koss is hopeful York residents will dig

in and that other community networks will take up the challenge.

"We want all that under-utilized land to be used. This is for fresh, nutritional food which is just amazing," she said.

Seeds For Change works with schools, seniors residences, faith leaders, fire stations, local businesses and municipalities to help York Region residents interested in learning how to grow, cook and preserve food for themselves and those in the community who need assistance.

Who do you think should be Whitchurch-Stouffville's 2012 Citizen of the Year?

Nominations are open for this year's award.

We are looking for a person who:

- makes our community a better place to live, work and play
- is involved to benefit more than his or her family or business
- sets a positive example for others

DEADLINE JUNE 10, 2012

Nominations should include nominee's detailed resume and letters of support.

e-mail: jmason@yrmg.com

Mail or hand deliver to:

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
6290 Main St.
Stouffville, Ont.
L4A 1G7

Attention: Jim Mason

For more information call **905-640-2612 ext. 23**

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