

Knowlton Academy garden building bee a success

Raised beds await the busy hands of students

By Ann Davidson

In stark contrast to the nasty, bone chilling temperature that forced almost everyone back into winter wear this past Saturday, the weather-maidens cooperated for the ambitious multi-generation volunteers who came out on Sunday to help build the framework for 13 raised gardens on the grounds of Knowlton Academy in TBL.

Grandparents, parents and students convened in the early morning sun donning tools, and heavier equipment and lots of yummy refreshments for the day ahead. They went home at the end of the day with blisters, dirt under their fingernails, sore muscles, topped with a bit of over sunning. They carried pride with them for successfully meeting their goal to provide the students with gardens to work in during this school year and forever.

Prior to the building bee students have been working on suggestions for names of the project considering it as the “growing ground,” designing images with their ideas, and nurturing the seeds they have planted in their classrooms that have already sprouted and are awaiting transplant.

Chris Marks, the grandparent of a young student attending the school, reminisced about playing hockey years ago on a rink that was then in the same

location as the gardens, while Corey Smith showed some of the youngsters how to use an electric drill and some other tools.

The Knowlton Academy Greenhouse and Garden Project has been strongly embraced by the school community and supported by the Eastern Townships School Board, the Town of Brome Lake, and the MRC Brome-Missisquoi. It is being carefully crafted to ensure its long-term presence at the school and within the community and is regarded by the ETSB as a pilot project that could serve as a model for other schools to foster in the future. It is intended to serve as a community-wide activity including regular interaction with the seniors. The goal is to provide the platform for students to connect with nature, develop skills and knowledge that will serve to sustain them in a region that is historically an agricultural zone and currently valued for its eco- and agro tourism. The project intends to provide a hands-on, living laboratory that connects food growing to food preparation.

Money is being raised to cover the cost of the program. A vigorous effort by the organizing committee to raise enough funds to build the greenhouse and to cover the cost of some of the activities along with unforeseen expenses has been underway since last fall. Although there has been a lot of success on this



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Three generations of volunteers cooperated, learned, shared the joy of building 13 raised garden beds at Knowlton Academy this past Sunday morning.

front, to date, half of the approximately \$80,000 project has been committed. Once the infrastructure is completed the annual cost of running the “garden to table program” is anticipated to be less dramatic. Thanks to the generosity of Louise Penny and Brome Lake Books, a

special fundraising concert in the tent that will be installed in Coldbrook Park, Knowlton, will be held in August to help push the project into place by the time the students return to school. Already the lineup of musical talent is guaranteed a good time for all.

Théâtre Lac-Brome

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appeal to the Franco-community, the grant was awarded largely in support of the perpetuation and support of the English-speaking community who originally settled in the area and continues to have a strong foothold here.

Member of Parliament Denis Paradis, who was on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony, jovially recounted his colleagues' envy about him representing the most beautiful region in Canada. “It's true,” he said adding, “and the people of Brome Lake are the nicest people with such big hearts.” Paradis is a strong supporter of the arts in this region. He says that there are more artists per capita in Brome-Missisquoi than anywhere else in Canada. That's why he knows that cultural infrastructure is essential to presenting the work of artists. He clearly shared the excitement of the crowd about the upgrades of a cultural space.

Hélène Jalbert, president of the Théâtre Lac-Brome board of directors, was giddy with excitement. She wants this upgrade and the lineup of performances to become an important drawing card that will help boost local economy and to be a lasting component that will serve to sustain and unify the community.

Since 1987 Théâtre Lac-Brome is a performance space that features a wide variety of professional shows such as plays, musical performances and comedy shows, and book launches. Alex Paterson, longtime patron of Brome Lake Theatre, was actively instrumental in finding a way to erect the building that

houses the theatre behind the Knowlton Pub. Reminiscing about the roller-coaster times that the non-profit organization has endured to keep performing Arts Alive at Brome Lake, he marvelled at this most recent success in transforming the theatre to an upscale centre in the heart of Knowlton that can now seat more than 150 people in new comfy seats while offering a sophisticated glassed-in modernist atrium as a reception area. Moreover, Paterson was impressed by the determination and perseverance of those who have never given up the fight to keep the theatre alive.

As Pynes says, the extension is functional in so many ways. It is perfect for receptions, and small concerts, especially with the grand piano (donated by the CARKE Foundation) located in that room. “And now there is a dressing room for actors as well as a place for an office.” The ceiling-to-floor sliding doors allow guests to spill out to a permanently covered patio during summer months. And there is plenty of space to park. He is thrilled about

the installation of wall hangers for art exhibitions.

There are members of the TBL community who want to make sure that the theatre that is tucked away from the mainstream traffic be made more visible. Jalbert and Pynes see that the facility can now offer the space out for conferences and receptions as well as art exhibitions. It will continue to support English theatre while including events that will appeal to both linguistic communities year round. Many in the TBL community are hoping that the theatre will support and showcase local talent as well. Pynes assured that he will make the effort to accommodate everyone as long as there would be no conflict with already scheduled events by the theatre.

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