

Julien Project Grows Roots at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic High School

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, January 15, 2010 - Guelph (ON) – ‘What does a healthy plant look like and if a plant is going to do well, what does it need to have to stay healthy?’. This is a question that is asked to participants at the Julien Project going into its 4th growing season. The Julien Project, who recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Guelph Community Foundation for their field organic vegetable production program, enriches lives and communities by social and therapeutic gardening.

The project would normally be slowing down at this time of year as the seeds have been saved, the vegetables harvested and the gardens put to bed. With an overwhelming interest in this project, and the generous support of funders, the program has been expanded into an indoor workshop at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre and a working greenhouse at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic High School. The greenhouse that was previously underutilized at Lourdes, allowed the Julien Project to expand their program and kick start the plantings during the winter months. This partnership allows students in the alternative learning program (ROOTS) to start the seeds and learn about propagation where they divide cuttings from a mother plant and nurture the small plants as they grow.

Being able to work indoors during the winter months benefits many people in the community - as for some, this is a time when they are more vulnerable to becoming isolated. “Experiential learning, such as the work in the green house, has been extremely beneficial to the students in the ROOTS Program”, stated Eileen Clinton, Principal of Alternative Education at the WCDSB, “many of our students thrive in these hands-on environments and it keeps the kids in school with a growing sense of belonging to their community.”

Programs and partnerships like this one have a very positive impact on children, youth and adults who are at risk. They learn how to grow, maintain and harvest organic vegetables and make healthy food choices. The project also contributes to poverty reduction by providing participants with skills that enable them to become more self reliant and healthy. “Except for the clean up, I like to work with and learn about the plants” said Justin Evans, student in the ROOTS program, “my attendance has improved 100% and I am happy to come to class”.



Photo at Lourdes greenhouse from left to right: Anne MacKay (Grants Committee, Guelph Community Foundation); Justin Kyle Evans (student); Eileen Clinton (Principal of Alternative Learning, WCDSB); Sharon Stewart (Executive Director, The Julien Project). In background: Andrea Olson (Executive Director, Guelph Community Foundation) and John Candiotta (Principal, Our Lady of Lourdes CHS).