

Summer won't be a time of rest and relaxation for some Wellington students



By Brock Weir

It's the end of June and students have excitedly made a break for summer ? but, for some Grade 5 students at Wellington Public School, the excitement is spending the summer following through on the work they started this year.

Earlier this year, Amanda Bonura's Grade 5 class and members of Wellington's Eco Team formally ?adopted? the nearby Elizabeth Hader Park through the Town of Aurora's Adopt-a-Park program.

Throughout the fall and winter, the students were regular visitors to the Timpson Drive green space, keeping it clean, picking up trash, and making sure all the playground equipment was graffiti-free and in working order.

As the school year drew to a close, however, they joined forces with members of the Town's Parks team to get their hands dirty planting a variety of trees and shrubs which will be a lasting legacy for the class.

?All of the students were so excited to plant,? Ms. Bonura tells The Auroran. ?We have been cleaning up the park all year so the planting portion of this project is something that they have been looking forward to all year long. This was a true incentive for the students first hand. Students were paired in groups of two or three, and worked together to find a great spot with lots of sunlight for their new tree. The students named our new 12 trees (Fred, Chanrey, James, General Fragrant, Treeless, Ivy are some of the names). They were also very happy to have the town workers who were able to share their knowledge on the types of trees that we planted. (Rhus typhina, Cornus sericea, Viburnum lentago, Rhus aromatica, Amelanchier canadensis).

?Students will continue in the participation of the Adopt a Park program in September, however, many local students have already expressed excitement to visit the park in the summer months. They want to visit their newly planted trees and watch them grow. They want to ensure they are cared for in all ways possible. Students have taken great pride and ownership in their contributions and have definitely learned that experiencing the outdoors and enjoying nature benefits our overall well being.?

In getting kids into the zone for the big day, Ms. Bonura says she and her fellow teachers had ?lengthy and elaborate? conversations with the class on the importance of planting trees and what they do for the environment. They were familiarized with photosynthesis, the role trees play in cleaning the air and oxygen production, and they even helped them learn the best places to plant, including gauging optimal sunlight, digging holes, and the best types of soil.

?The key message we are trying to communicate through our student ambassadors is that we need to protect our environment and continue to be conscious of our actions as we have a huge impact on the future,? she says. ?Every single student's contribution helps to make an impact on our local community, and in the grander scheme of things our entire planet. Students are environmental advocates spreading their knowledge in all ways they can. Students will always remember that they contributed to the development of our already beautiful local park by planting trees. This has benefited our earth with new trees, we know that we have helped improve air quality, provide oxygen and fight climate change. They have also helped ensure that their local park is a safe place for children to visit and have also helped wildlife who also enjoy visiting the park.?

With this, she says the benefits of other classes and schools taking up the Adopt a Park challenge are clear.

?We need to invest in our future by caring for our environment. We are keeping our parks and community clean and beautiful by frequently visiting our parks for clean up and spreading awareness of the consequences of littering. We are able to protect our children and wildlife by eliminating any risks that can pose safety concerns to park visitors, especially curious children who may

pick up unknown items. Please consider contributing in any little way you can, as a little effort can go a long way.?