

## Community rallies to help Regency Acres Public School end year on high note



**By Brock Weir**

Students' faces fell when they came to Regency Acres Public School last Wednesday.

What was supposed to be a happy time as they counted down to the last half-day of the school year on Thursday, young kindergarten students were 'disappointed' when they went outside to discover overnight vandalism had turned over and otherwise destroyed raised flowerbeds they had lovingly tended throughout the year.

'Their faces when they came in was disappointing for me, but it was a teachable moment for me,' says teacher Kim Carretta.

And it was a teachable moment for the community as they rallied together to rebuild the gardens in time for the start of class on Thursday morning.

Parents, students from Regency Acres and beyond, and the community at large came out to clean up and replant following a post on social media from parent Eden Boudreau.

Her post, along with pictures of the incident, immediately struck a chord with the community, causing a groundswell of support that overwhelmed Regency Acres.

'It was an amazing response from the community,' says Ms. Boudreau. 'I had just come to drop off my son and I was just so saddened by it. I took a picture, kind of in anger, posted on Facebook just to say, 'this is our community and how sad and disrespectful for the kids' and it just blew up and the response was just overwhelming ' even from people who don't even go here. So many offered to help and offered their support, and it just seemed like the least we could do to help the kids.

'Aurora is very close-knit. It is very small. We, as parents, know there aren't a lot of young kids in Aurora, and this was something so special to them that they worked hard for. We want to give kids reasons to be responsible, be outside, see how things grow, and have these living 'labs' these teachers have worked so hard.

'That is why it was really important to get it done on [Thursday morning so the kids] didn't go into the next year with that disappointment. Kids their age knew it was older kids that had done it and you don't want to have that disillusion. We want them to know the community will come together for them, have their back and that kind of thing.'

Jordan Proctor is a community member that also has their back.

A student at another school, she says when her mom shared the Facebook post with her, she immediately knew she wanted to do her part to help.

'It touched me and I couldn't believe someone would come out and do that,' says Jordan. 'I really wanted to help restore the garden, especially since it is kindergarten and I had heard how they worked so hard and how the teacher had worked for many years to get these in place.'

Indeed, Ms. Carretta says the students had been 'really instrumental' in looking after the gardens as they progressed, 'watching them, watching every strawberry, talking about it, and generating a lot of conversations.'

'The community gathered together due to this unfortunate event and I am grateful on the last day of school we all joined together to rebuild our community garden,' adds Principal Lisa Leoni. 'There was an immediate response from the community. We had parents calling in to see how they could help. Some parents contacted Canadian Tire who provided some supplies for us, and teachers and

the community worked together. It was [a great end] to a great year.?

