

Earth Day celebrated at Riverside Park



Jane Kali, left, and York River Public School students work on potting local heritage seeds. The seeds are part of a seed library, used in community gardens. More on page 2. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

The weather last Friday was damp and dreary. But the spirits at Riverside Park were anything but, as over 150 people turned out to celebrate Earth Day, established 46 years ago to raise awareness of environmental issues.

The day started with a traditional 'smudge', led by Marsha Depotier of the Bancroft branch of the Metis Nation of Ontario. Then people began to pick up the rain barrels that they had ordered. All day long, NERD students from North Hastings High School carried the large barrels to people's cars and trucks. Organizer Jay Gizuk reported that over 100 barrels had been sold. This not only helps the purchasers with their gardening, but also brought in about a thousand dollars for 'Harvest the North' in its efforts to help achieve local food security.

The other main activity was the planting of local seeds by students of York River Public School. North Hastings Community Trust executive director Jane Kali brought to fruition (pardon the pun) the concept of a 'library' for the sharing of seeds from local plants and veggies, which was a legacy concept from Lori Anne Storing, a former kindergarten teacher at Maynooth Public School. Kali stated that the project was now a fitting memorial to her memory.

Seeds from the library, now maintained in a 'seed library' by Kali, are used in community gardens. The first of these were planted last year in Riverside Park. This summer, the numbers of beds there will increase. In addition, the gardens will have plants at the library, Bancroft town office, and The Chateau apartments. Kalie hopes to see other locations develop as well. She reports that there is 'tremendous enthusiasm' for the project, and they will see what they have the volunteer staff to do.

Earth Day appropriately ended with a 'pot luck' dinner, shared by all who brought a dish to the communal meal. Approximately 75 people jammed the dining room at Heart of the Park.

All told, a great showing for the local environment.