

Fish Hatchery dinner spawns support for trout stocking work



By Tony Pearson

The North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery held its ninth annual pig and lamb roast at the Bancroft Curling Club on Saturday night. The occasion was multi-purpose: to report on another successful year's operations, to honour special volunteers, and to raise funds for the hatchery's activities. As the rink was completely filled, with over 350 seats taken, the last objective was successful. With proceeds from dinner sales as well as auctions and raffles, treasurer Wendy Maxwell estimated that the organization would realize over \$20,000 for the event; she thanked all the volunteers who organized the dinner and provided items for the auctions. The money is needed to pay power and food bills, as the hatchery grows thousands of trout each year from eggs to a size where they can be released into local lakes. Since 2008, the hatchery has raised and stocked well over 100,000 lake and brook trout in local lakes. This year, the released lake trout were particularly imposing, their release weight pushing 400 grams/one pound ? about ten times the average size of provincially-stocked trout. The organization has just started a new stocking cycle, which will see five lakes stocked for the next five years: Paudash, Hudson, Dark (Pusey), Lyell (Cross), and Limestone. As well, about a thousand brook trout found new homes in two area lakes, as part of a multi-year rehabilitation. The idea is to re-establish naturally reproducing brook trout in the area ? fitting the hatchery mantra ?local fish for local lakes?.

To complement its stocking efforts, the hatchery is also launching a new campaign: ?Adopt A Brook Trout?. For \$20, sponsors can not only monitor their fish's growth on the website, but also attend the stocking event next June.

Once more at its dinner, the hatchery gave a shout-out to the NERDS and NOS students from North Hastings High, who show up regularly on Tuesdays to help, as they have for a number of years. Also acknowledged was a new program through Loyalist College, which allowed the hatchery to engage three students for a variety of jobs. The organization also saluted Duncan Wilson, a client of North Hastings Community Integration Association, who works at the hatchery on feeding and cleaning duties; this is a new venture to employ developmentally delayed young people. Wilson expressed his thanks for the opportunity presented by the program to develop work skills and show how such workers can contribute to a business.

Finally, Denis Brown received the Volunteer of the Year award. This was presented by NHCFH co-founder Mary Lefevre, who called Brown, the hatchery's operations manager, ?our Go-To guy? whenever there's a problem that needs fixing. ?He's the first name on our emergency call list,? Lefevre stated; ?Not only does he keep the hatchery running smoothly, he even does tours. And he's a really community guy, who has volunteered with a number of local groups over the years.? Lefevre also noted that the award isn't decided by the board, but voted by all the hatchery volunteers, ?making it even more of an honour, being elected by your peers.?