

## Planting community spirit at Bird's Creek Public School



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By Chris Drost

It was an exciting afternoon on Oct. 14 as three students, along with parent council member, Jen Card, dug carrots and potatoes from the school's raised garden beds to donate to the North Hastings Community Cupboard.

The school started the garden beds five years ago with support originally with soil from nearby Birds Creek Developing, lumber from Monaghan Lumber and a grant from Foodland. "The kids normally grow food for the school's annual whole school turkey lunch but because that is not going to happen this year, they decided to donate the vegetables to the North Hastings Community Cupboard," says Card.

The entire school typically helps in small groups to do everything from soil preparation in the spring, planting, weeding, watering and picking, plus getting the beds ready for winter. This year however, it has had to be simplified due to COVID-19 and all the work has taken place after hours.

"This is an enriching experience for the kids. It is great to do things for the school," explains Card. The project was initiated by the parent council, an active group that currently has 12-14 members.

This year, the children grew carrots, potatoes and some onions. By far, their greatest success this year was the crop of carrots. Emellia, Hadlyn and Averi pulled the carrots and proudly displayed them for the camera. Card credits the spacing of the carrots for their size. In the potato patch the kids dug right in without a care for getting their hands dirty, and soon found an ample supply of potatoes to add to the donation to the local food bank. They expertly tossed aside any green potatoes and the dried stalks with obvious enjoyment.

Once Card had packaged up the fruit of their labours, it was off to the North Hastings Community Cupboard where volunteer, Jay Gizuk was waiting to accept the expected donation. While everyone was masked, the pride in helping the community was evident in the eyes of each of the children.

"We wanted to donate the produce where it could benefit others. NHCC was first on our list. We are also donating a tower garden we are not using to them as we know they are using tower gardens to produce food for those in the community who need it," says Marion Wilson, principal of the school.