

## Chapter celebrates Earth Day by greening school yard



Waterloo members help the cause. From left; Thomas Blatter of Dream Estate Landscaping, and Eric Ferreira and Jay Dietrich from Ace Lawn Care.

Landscape Ontario's Waterloo Chapter celebrated Earth Day, Apr. 22, by supporting a school yard greening project at Kitchener's J. W. Gerth Public School in Doon South.

For the past three years, LO's Waterloo Chapter has chosen a school that is in need of plantings in the playground. Dave Wright, president of LO's Waterloo Chapter, says, "Typically a school is selected that has nothing or very few existing plantings and J. W. Gerth, a public school that opened in September 2008, is ideal." LO's

support of the school ground greening project had assistance from local chapter members Ace Lawn Care, Adams Landscape Supply, Allgreen Tree Service, Coleman Equipment, Dream Estate Landscaping, Elmira Farm Service, Fast Forest, Frieburger Landscape, Helmutz Landscaping, Kitchener Tractor, Native Plant Source, Sheridan Nurseries, Snider Turf and Landscape Management, TNT Property Maintenance and Wright Landscape Services. These businesses generously provided their expertise, time and

landscaping materials to ensure local schools are great places for children to play, learn and grow.

Susan Schaffner, principal at J. W. Gerth, says, "This is such a wonderful gift from Landscape Ontario and the many donors involved with them. We appreciate their help to make our school yard greening project a reality. Our vision is to turn our brand new and very bare school yard into a setting which provides shade, wind protection and other activities that address the needs of all of the children in our school. We have designed the yard to provide the community at large with a beautiful park-like setting to bring their families when the school is not in session."

The school yard, creatively named Wolves' Wonderland by the J.W. Gerth students, will be an exciting place for students and families to enjoy year round. Dave Wright believes that, "Greening projects like these are important to the community as a whole, and are also made possible when there is a dedicated group of parents, teachers and students that will take care of the trees after they are planted. This is an ideal way to give back to the community while promoting the horticultural industry to the public. Parents and teachers are all possible clients and the students are future employees or horticultural business owners. Any time we can obtain a captive audience to show what we can do as an industry, we jump at the opportunity."

A 'greened' yard is more than just plant material. A few simple items like rocks, trees, paths, berms and mulch in the right place and in the right arrangement makes the world of difference for students, teachers and the community on an otherwise sterile school ground. Dennis Wendland, school ground greening consultant with Evergreen's Learning Grounds Program, worked closely with Gerth's staff, parents from the school's greening committee and Landscape Ontario to help transform the school yard from a tarmac with sparse plantings into a lush green space and into a "great place for a wolf to play."

In addition to providing seed-funding, Evergreen works as a partner and liaison between the Waterloo Region Board of Education, schools and partners like Landscape Ontario to guide them through a process whereby school yards are revitalized. The results of this partnership are significant. Evergreen research shows that greened school yards have the ability to reconnect youth with nature, reduce bullying and knock and bump injuries, protect students from harmful UVR exposure and provide teachers and students with comfortable classroom spaces outdoors.

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