

GARDEN PARTY AT ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, WEDNESDAY MAY 16, 2012

A garden party on Wednesday May 16th was a celebration of the new gardening season at St. Thomas Aquinas. But it was much more than that. It was a celebration to recognize some of the many people who have somehow played a role in the creation of the Giving Garden.

Guests were welcomed by Principal Richard James, and vice principal, Eva McHenry. Ann Jackson, the lead teacher for the Environmental SHSM program, welcomed each of the individuals and different groups to the garden, and explained the initial vision for creating the garden. The idea of a Giving Garden had been proposed three years earlier by Terry McEvoy; the purpose of the garden was to make the harvest available to those in need and for people to experience the joy in giving to others. Terry passed away suddenly in 2009 before being able to put his dream into action. Terry McEvoy described it this way:

The Giving Garden is a space for you. Anyone may come, anytime, to plant, to nurture, to harvest-and with the harvest, to give. It is a place for you to take a break, to learn, and, in time, to fill a need: flowers for a friend, tomatoes for a shut-in, sweet corn for the charity barbecue...the plants which are grown here will be given, the time to care for them given, and, in time, the harvest will all be there for giving...by you.

Ann Jackson described the garden this way: "A garden is a feeling of community, a place that is open to everyone, and a sense of promise. Today is a celebration of spring – of our new gardening season, and the potential that lies ahead. Things are growing up around us; it is a sense of promise. When students and visitors come to the greenhouse, they all remark how peaceful it is here."

People who come to visit the garden are welcome to take away flowers and produce, and can even enjoy giving them to someone else who might appreciate the produce.

A special guest in attendance was Michelle McEvoy who officially unveiled the newly installed Giving Garden sign. The sign reads "Where you do not see the example, be the example. Where you do not see the hope, be the hope."



Another garden partner present at the celebration was Nutrients for Life, represented by Tanya Black. This organization has worked closely with the Horticultural Society and St. Thomas Aquinas to promote gardens in schools everywhere. They have even collaborated to produce a video on the advantages of having a school garden (Check <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PWQKXYSSw8>). Here, Tanya Black is seen presenting a cheque for \$500.00 to Ann Jackson and STA to encourage further work for the garden.



Other guests to the garden party included STA students, seniors from Russell Meadows and members of the Russell and District Horticultural Society and school council. Mayor JP St. Pierre was in attendance as well as CDSBEO board trustee Robin Riel, and Ray Barton, from PASS (Partnering to Achieve Student Success). Other members of the community, including a representative from the food bank were also present.

In the photos below, seniors from Russell Meadows examine the flowers and vegetables being grown in the greenhouse. Everyone had a chance to mingle and enjoy refreshments at the celebration.



Students pose with the school futures cheque that has been donated from the School Garden Network to St. Thomas Aquinas CHS.

