

SHARE THE HEALTH

PROJECT NAME: Our Lady of the Rosary School Naturalization Project

A. CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Community location: Sylvan Lake, Alberta

2. Contact name: Margaretrose Willms

3. Organization: Our Lady of the Rosary School, Red Deer Catholic School Division

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B. INITIATIVE INFORMATION

1. Name of initiative: School Naturalization Project
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2. Target population: Pre-K to grade 2 children and their families, senior citizens and community members

3. Location served: Sylvan Lake Community

4. Name of leader and organization: Margaretrose Willms, Principal, Our Lady of the Rosary School, Red Deer Catholic School Division
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C. INITIATIVE SUMMARY

1. Briefly describe the initiative:

- This school has chosen to become a Community Garden School.

2. What were the main objectives of the program?
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- Partner with the community in promoting and encouraging food security within the Town of Sylvan Lake.
- Improve access to healthy nutritious choices for children and families at this school.
- To increase options for daily physical activity and environmental awareness for school students by participation in gardening, play and outdoor classroom activities.

3. Please list the key successes:

- Support from Red Deer Catholic School Division, Town of Sylvan lake, Community Gardens, 3 local businesses, Sylvan lake Municipal Library, Community/Collective Kitchens, Growing Green Neighbours (Community Food Security initiative), Communities in Bloom and the Sylvan Lake Bethany Centre.
- Partnership and support from the David Thompson Health Region. The health region assisted by providing the services of Cathy White, School Health Facilitator who helped to guide staff and students in the planning and participation of the project.
- Partnership and support from the Red Deer College Social Work program which provided Cindy Campbell, a Social work field placement student to

- work on assisting with the coordination of this project.
- Go Green Trade Show was put on by a local business, The Landscape Depot. This was held at the school to offer the school and community information on landscaping, composting, food security, container gardening etc.
 - “Power to Play”, an AB Milk resource that teaches students about healthy eating and active living, was presented to staff in September. All teachers use this program in their health classes.
 - Teachers incorporate lessons on healthy snacks, lunches and breakfasts by using the foods grown in the school garden.
 - Catholic Women’s League assisting students make stepping-stones for the Rosary garden.
 - Foods served in the school as well as offered through the weekly hot lunch program model healthy choices.
 - No vending machines in the school.
 - Paper recycling has offered the students from each class the opportunity to be environmentally responsible. Each class takes a turn recycling cans etc.
 - The School Newsletter incorporates healthy eating and gardening tips.
 - Senior citizens taught teachers and students about seeds as well as assisted with planting, maintaining and helping with harvesting the garden. Raised garden beds allowed for easy access as the beds were made to be accessible for senior citizens and wheelchair users.
 - Healthy living is discussed at Parent Advisory Council Meetings
 - A compost bin was donated by the school secretary
 - Food that was grown was used to make soup for children, staff and parents that attended the “Stone Soup” celebration. The seniors from the Seniors Lodge joined the school for the Stone Soup celebration and the soup lunch.
 - Extra produce was donated to the “Community Dinner” which is a free meal for everyone in Sylvan Lake to promote a sense of community and provide a free meal. What was not served at the dinner was distributed to families in need to take home.
 - The outdoor classroom, gazebo, rosary garden, playground and garden offer opportunities for children to be physically active outdoors.
 - One playground structure is an inclusive playground, wheelchair accessible and has a rubberized surface.
 - Fruit trees and grasses native to Sylvan Lake have been planted.
 - Children, staff, and parents from the school were involved from the outset on creating a vision, planning and working on the development of the school naturalization project.
 - Contacted Alberta Forestry and had seedlings delivered to the school. One tree was sent home with every student and staff member at the school. This was done around the time of the Go Green Expo and some

were distributed at the expo as well.

- “Operation Porchlight” representatives distributed bulbs at the tradeshow.
- Participated in “Pitch In” week and all students helped with cleaning up the neighborhood.
- Feb. 09 celebrated Milk Week by providing classroom challenges, scavenger hunts, trivia questions and prizes.
- Participated in Winter Walk day. The whole school walked together around the neighborhood.
- Nutrition Month Activities. Began by participating in the “Big Crunch” – all students met in the foyer to receive an apple donated by No Frills. They all took a bite at the same time to recognize the importance of eating healthy and celebrating nutrition month. Each week students are encouraged to focus on a different type of snack. First week – fruit. Second week – veggies. Third week – all 4 food groups in their lunch.
- Every day students participate in “Body Break” just before DEAR to start their afternoon off.
- Students write “How To’s and focus on preparing healthy snacks ie. Smoothies, fruit salad, wraps, pita pizzas.

D. IMPLEMENTATION

1. Were any partnerships developed or strengthened as part of the initiative? (# of partners, names or organizations)
 - Business such as The Landscape Depot, Rocky Mountain Design and Landscaping and Ryders Ridge Inc. were involved in the development of this project.
 - The Royal Bank has helped to support the school by donating to the hot lunch program.
 - The local AG - Cobbs grocery store has also helped with this initiative.
 - No Frills grocery store donated apples for all staff and students for the “Big Crunch” celebration to kick off Nutrition Month.
 - Funding from the Ronald McDonald House, Alberta Lottery, Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness fund and the Sylvan Lake Grow Green Neighbors helped fund this program
2. How long did it take to plan and implement the initiative? 6 months.

E. CHALLENGES

What challenges have you had to work with?

1. In order to sustain project, leaders are required.
2. Time.
3. Manpower.
4. Weather.

How were the challenges overcome?

- By involving students and teachers with ongoing evaluation and planning and including this in our school plans we are implementing sustainability in this initiative.
- Katimavik Students have been invited to volunteer at the school.
- Garden boxes were assembled at the same time as the playground to save people having to donate time for each of the projects. Everything was done at once.
- Even though the rain delayed planting, the garden was put in.

F. EVALUATION / RESULTS

1. List the outcomes achieved:

- More than anticipated.
- A binder has been further developed with information for teachers about gardening, environmental/outdoor classroom education, healthy eating and active living. CD's with newsletter information, research etc is available for all teachers.
- The DTHR Dietician Deb Buffum provided a resource binder called - GREAT (Growth, Relationships, Eating, Activity & Teamwork) to the school, which was further developed by the Social Work Student Cindy Campbell to provide a resource for the school.
- The Mayor of Sylvan Lake has been booked to come and do a presentation to all students on the environment and being eco-friendly in Sylvan Lake.
- Composting and an indoor greenhouse is the next step that is being looked at.

2. How did you evaluate the initiatives success?

- Surveys are to be distributed to students, parents, teachers and the community.

3. How did you share the results with your community and stakeholders?

- Media releases by the local newspaper.
- Celebration events. (Year end Bar-B-Q, Stone Soup Assembly, Bar-B-Q and thank you to supporters)
- Interagency meetings.

G. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Please briefly provide additional information that should be considered when planning such an initiative:

- Stay positive and believe it can happen !