

## Marshall Students Build Community Park

September 28, 2011

Grade 8 and 9 students from Marshall School were working hard this past week preparing a community park that they've established for winter. The park, which lies along the south side of the community of Marshall, currently features rows of spruce, beds of trees and shrubs beside the community skate park, and a streambed lined with rocks and plants. Students under the direction of teacher Cindy McKerchar were busy edging, mulching, planting more trees and shrubs.

"It's important," said McKerchar, "when you're planting small trees to be able to see what the park will look like in forty years."

The concept of students working to build a community park came about last year.

"Teacher Michael Horgan expressed a desire to establish a service education class for grade 7 here at Marshall School," said Principal Colin Covey. "We thought that this would be a good way to get the students involved in a positive way with the community and build a good relationship between the school and the town. The students came up with the idea of building a community garden last year. Initially the plans that they drew up were huge, but after some second thought they scaled it down and began to look at ways to fund it. They had to go through the funding process, and then they began to look at what types of trees and shrubs would work well in our environment –low maintenance, self sustaining and attractive. Last year in the spring the money began to come in and they built five raised beds and filled them with flowers donated by Greenjay."

"Summer came, and Michael left us, and teacher Cindy McKerchar and I went out to the park," said Covey. "There was still funding in place, and we saw potential. We thought that with the funds that we had left over we could expand the initial project. We wanted to give the town a vision of what the park could look like. Cindy drew up plans for an expansion, and we put things into high gear. She did a lot of legwork, phoning companies and getting donations and also our vice-principal Trish Markevich helped a lot in the summer."

"Once we started working people just kept showing up to help," noted Covey, "Glenn Hay, Gary Christian, the ladies from the store, and other community members. We never dreamed we'd get that much support and the positive vibe we've been getting from the people in the community about the school has just been so nice. We still have the Service Ed class and we plan to let the grade 8 class keep the project for the next two years and then pass it on when they reach grade 10."

"Getting Cindy on board has been great," said Covey, "she has great ideas and excellent gardening and landscaping skills."

“The concept is to eventually create a 5 km long park,” said McKerchar, “and I believe that the key is to open the park up to the community as something that they can actively use and share in their daily lives as opposed to building something to just look at.”

“What we envision,” she said, gesturing at the western horizon, “is a berry corner over there with fruit trees and shrubs that people can use come the fall. Then, a running track and loop system that will run through here and along the park linking up with the Terry Fox Running route for the many, many people in town who run and jog. We hope to place an antique wagon on one side of the skate park, and we’re in the process of building a gazebo for picnics for this side. It will be a long term commitment by the students and the school.”

Student Austin Laughren agreed. “ I think it’s good for the community,” he said. “It gives people a place to be.”

“The people and businesses who’ve donated plants, materials, time and labour have been just wonderful, said both McKerchar and Covey. “All of us, the students and staff of Marshall School would like to thank everyone for their participation in this project: the Synergy Credit Union and SaskEnergy for the funding that they have provided; the Home Depot, Canadian Tire, Home Hardware, TLC Landscaping, Greenjay and Wal-Mart for their contributions of plants, shrubs, trees and landscaping materials; a special thanks to Mal McConnell for his time and truck; to Glenn Hay of Glenn’s Woodhaven for the use of his equipment, for caring for the plants and for the great work he’s doing building an ornamental bridge to cross the stream; to Blair Jezowski of L and L Oilfield for the flagpole and for his expertise and help with a bobcat and loader; to Gary Christian of Christian’s Mobile Welding for the centerpiece rock and a cash donation; to Marshall’s Place for the wagon and help and the Town of Marshall for the topsoil and bobcat work; and to Scott McKerchar for his time and effort and for the 14 truckloads of rocks for the stream bank. Brad Douglas, mayor of Marshall, also supported us with his time and a load of mulch, and Aaron Lines, a community member, spent his summer hauling truck loads of water to keep our garden in bloom. With their help our dream is becoming a reality.”



(Left to Right)  
Austin Laughren and  
Scott McKerchar



Austin Jezowoski, Jacob Lines, Morghan Gottinger



Austin Laughren, Scott McKerchar, Cole Patey

(All photos courtesy Murray McDonnell)