

HFFA celebrates Trillium grant for local food opportunities

By Bill Rea

The Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA) is expanding its successful Farm to School program, and it's got a large grant to help with the work.

About 100 people were on hand recently for a public open house at Caledon Equestrian Park, and it was there that Winston Uytenbogaart, a volunteer with the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced HFFA is getting a grant of \$299,700 over two years. He said the money is intended to help with this program, as well as other efforts the Alliance is working on.

Getting to the young people is the place to go, he remarked.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones was also on hand for the announcement

Welcome to the hotbed of food production in Caledon! she declared.

This investment by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to expand Farm to School programs in the Headwaters region is great news for many of our communities, Jones stated. There are many people in the community who will benefit from this and it ensures that our local food sector will continue to thrive.

Mayor Allan Thompson was on hand as well to congratulate HFFA on getting the grant. He said educating the public about local food is important, as so are programs run by the Alliance.

A lot of people take food for granted here, he remarked, commenting on the need to get back to basics on understanding how local food is grown, preserved and prepared.

HFFA is working on expanding the reach of its existing programs.

Jennifer Payne, program co-ordinator with HFFA, was pleased to see a lot of young people at Friday's announcement.

This really has been a labour of love for us, she commented.

The Farm to S



Winston Uytenbogaart of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones were on hand for the announcement of the Trillium grant to the Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance (HFFA). Accepting the announcement were Headwaters Communities in Action (HCIA) Chair Chris Broom, HCIA Program Lead Shirley Boxem and HFFA Program Co-ordinators Nicole Hambleton and Jennifer Payne.



There were lots of hands-on things for kids to do. Councillor Jennifer Innis was helping her daughters Lyra, 3, and Jolee, 6, Pallister cut carrots.



Zachary and Dexter Thomson of Mono got the chance to practise making granola at Friday's HFFA open house.



Amy Ouchterlony of Fiddle Foot Farm in Mulmur spoke at the open house, and was also putting on a demonstration on pickling carrots.

chool program is one of the efforts they are working on. It includes workshops for different grade levels, and is aimed at engaging schools and families to strengthen the foundation of a future food system that promoted health, while connecting communities with a healthy environment. The effort is to encourage the next generation of families to connect with where their food comes from. As well, she said there's a monthly food club, in which participants gather a selection of items to carry the local food message home. "It's essentially a monthly meal in a bag," she commented.

Payne also said they are working on setting up family food classes, which would be set up something like a cooking class, with a farmer, chef and dietician on hand to offer their perspectives on the food.

She also said this was a culmination of work that started more than four years ago, through food summits, community input and a number of groups and individuals getting together to discuss food and farming.

Amy Ouchterlony of Fiddle Foot Farm in Mulmur, described her enjoyment at being involved in the program, adding it's given her a chance to connect with the local market.

Ouchterlony used to be a teacher.

"That side of me really gets revved up by the farm to School workshops," she said. "That's been a blast!"

Darlene Kingstone, a teacher at St. Andrew Elementary School in Orangeville, said she had been surprised to find youngsters in the community were not involved in the food culture. She asked organizers to bring the program to her classroom, and quality learning started fast.

?The farmers made it real for them,? she said.

The trillium grant will enable HFFA to hire staff, host workshops, produce education kits and evaluate the impact of their work after two years.

?The impact of this funding is extremely significant, and we're very excited to have the Ontario Trillium Foundation invest in our Farm to School programs,? commented Nicole Hambleton, a program coordinator with the Alliance.