

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Earth Day School Yard Greening J. W. Gerth Public School (Kitchener) Photo Opp: Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at 11:20 a.m.**

Waterloo, ON (April 14, 2009) – **On Wednesday, April 22, Landscape Ontario’s Waterloo Chapter celebrates Earth Day by supporting a school yard greening project at Kitchener’s J. W. Gerth Public School in Doon South.**

For the past three years, **Landscape Ontario’s Waterloo Chapter** has chosen a school that is in need of plantings in their playground. Dave Wright, president of Landscape Ontario’s Waterloo Chapter says that “typically a school is selected that has no, or very little existing, plant material and J. W. Gerth, a public school that opened in September 2008, is ideal”. Landscape Ontario demonstrates its ongoing support of school ground greening projects with 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, located throughout Waterloo Region, generously provide 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 Schoolyard Greening Project a reality. Our vision is to turn our brand new and very bare schoolyard into a setting which provides shade, wind protection, and other activities which address the needs of all of the children in our school, whether they be active or passive players during Nutrition Breaks. We have also designed it with the Doon South community in mind, hoping to provide the community at large with a beautiful park-like setting to bring their families when the school is not in session.”

“Wolves’ Wonderland” the schoolyard creatively named 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 typical sterile school ground. Dennis Wendland, School Ground Greening Consultant with **Evergreen’s Learning Grounds Program** has worked closely with Gerth’s staff, parents from the School’s Greening Committee and Landscape Ontario to help transform the schoolyard 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 Boards of Education, schools and partners like Landscape Ontario to guide them through a process whereby schoolyards are revitalized. The results of this partnership are significant. Evergreen research shows that 'greened' schoolyards have the ability to re-connect 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.

## **PHOTO OPP: 11:20 a.m. – Wednesday, April 22, 2009 (Rain or Shine)**

**Media are invited to join Staff, Students & Supporters of this project for formal remarks at J.W. Gerth's 'Wolves' Wonderland' which will take place at 11:20 a.m.**

**Location: J. W. Gerth Public School  
171 Apple Ridge Drive, Kitchener**

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