



## Students of Sydenham High School win top prize for green practices

Posted Jun 23, 2011 By [Hollie Pratt-Campbell](#)

EMC News - The front yard of Sydenham High School got a little greener last Thursday, thanks to the sustainability efforts of Mark Richards' Grade 9 science class.

The students won a contest hosted by the Kingston Sustainability Centre earlier this year, which challenged them to reduce their carbon footprint at home with their families by considering their practices regarding things like waste, water and transportation. Two separate audits of everyday practices found that Richards' students had the greatest average improvement out of everyone who participated.

Their prize was a 12-foot sugar maple tree, to match the others on the school's property, which was donated by Western Landscape Services.

"It feels fantastic (to have won)," said student Bryar Vuyk. "It makes us so proud. It's a great thing that we as a class accomplished this, and got this added to our school property. Trees look nice on their own, and environmentally they're great things to have around."

The students are excited to watch the tree grow over their next three years at Sydenham, and note that they have learned a lot from the exercise about being mindful regarding how much they consume.

"If you have less, it makes a greater (positive) impact on the world," said student Logan Doyle. "Our eco footprint is reduced when we make less garbage, and because we don't really have any more places to put it we might as well start now rather than later."

The initiative was also an extension of Western Landscape Services' Plant A Tree Make Our City Cool campaign, which aims to educate Kingston-area students about the importance of trees in urban settings. In addition to Sydenham, five schools received trees over the course of the spring, and five more will in the fall.

"We're trying to...introduce people to, or remind them of the health benefits and the energy saving benefits (of planting a tree)," said Western Landscape's Joe Palmieri. "It can just improve quality of life, and that's basically what the program is about."

In addition, the other 10 schools will receive butterfly gardens in the fall. Palmieri explained that butterfly gardens are good for the environment because they provide a habitat for pollinating insects and butterflies.

"As we destroy habitat, it's nice when we recreate a habitat for that type of thing," he said. "A lot of people overlook the importance of insects in our ecosystem."

Sydenham principal Jessica Silver noted that this was an interesting and unique activity that allowed the students to recognize the impact of their daily activities.

"This was a really an exciting way for them to change their own practices...and to see the impact it will have on the environment around them," she said.

Silver also commented that "it's a great prize for the school because it makes us all a little more aware of sustainability issues, and it's just exciting to be able to see (the tree). They can look out their windows and see it growing."

Richards added that the whole experience has been great for the students, and that he hopes they will carry the lessons with them for many years to come.

"The idea is that they take what they have learned home, and use it in everyday life, whether it's something as simple as decreasing the water they use in their house, to eventually down the road continuing on with biology and sustainability in their lives."

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Hollie Pratt-Campbell, Frontenac EMC Western Landscape's Joe Palmieri and Mark Richards' Grade 9 science class at Sydenham High School plant a sugar maple tree on the school's front yard.



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