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## Green funding provides gardening adventure for children in Chester Le



**Scarborough Mirror** by Danielle Milley

Toronto Green Community was able to brew some good in Chester Le this past summer.

The environmental organization was nominated for recognition as part of Maxwell House's Brew Some Good campaign and received a \$10,000 donation. Paula Messina, co-director at Toronto Green Community, said she was jumping up and down when she found out the good news in the spring.

"In some ways it was that much more rewarding to know there were so many people out there who were willing to nominate us," she said.

The money was used to expand its garden programming to the benefit of a Scarborough neighbourhood.

"The timing was good because it was spring when we found out about it," she said.

The money went into several different garden programs including the community garden program, developing an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) manual for gardening, and its Great Garden Adventures program for children. The biggest benefit of the money was being able to take the Great Gardens Adventure program and adapt it into a children's gardening project for new areas of the city.

"We were able to begin two pilot projects in two priority neighbourhoods," Messina said.

The larger of those two projects was in Scarborough's Chester Le neighbourhood where Toronto Green Community ran a four-week program for children aged six to eight. TGC had worked in the community last year helping to create a garden plot at the Chester Le Community Corner.

The idea for the children's program grew out of this, Messina said, and the funding made it possible.

During the program the children played games to help them learn the names of what was planted in the garden. They did some planting of their own with TGC helping them to plant items such as radishes, peas, and carrots.

"We think it's important to get kids back in touch with the natural environment...to understand their connection to nature," Messina said.

The program teaches youngsters how to work together, to understand the ecological system - why sun and water are important for growing plants - and to grow their own food.

"It's important for kids to understand how important that can be," she said.

Toronto Green Community also visited the summer camp run by North York Community House in the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood. Representatives from TGC visited the camp twice to deliver programming on the life cycle of plants where the children were able to germinate their own seeds.

Messina said both programs were great learning opportunities for TGC to better tailor neighbourhood specific programming in the future.

The funding helped expand the other garden programming by allowing TGC to plant food in one of the raised beds in its Eglinton Park Heritage Community Garden where volunteers come to learn about gardening and how to grow food without using chemicals. The ESL gardening guide received input from Greenest City and an ESL instructor from the Parkdale library branch. Messina said they hope to finalize it during the winter and make it available to community and gardening groups next year.

The Toronto Green Community is a grassroots organization that has been working since 1995 on local environmental action for a cleaner and greener Toronto.

For more information on its programming, visit [www.torontogreen.ca](http://www.torontogreen.ca)

<http://www.insidetoronto.com/news-story/43967-green-funding-provides-gardening-adventure-for-children-in-chester-le/>