

North Central Community Garden given national nod

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REGINA -- With a nickname like "the tomato whisperer" Jan Morier is someone with a lot to offer the North Central Community Garden project.

Now that project, which first took root last summer with one garden and has now blossomed into four, is receiving national attention.

The project, is one of three winners of a \$1,000 cash award offered as part of a national gardening initiative competition put on by Vision TV and Merit Motion pictures, which produces the *Recreating Eden* series.

"We are so proud of our four gardens, especially now that we have received this special recognition. If they recognized that this initiative is aimed to bring a greater sense of community spirit and growth for our neighborhood then we are very grateful for that," said Morier, one of the project's coordinators.

David Todd, media relations manager for Vision TV, said when he saw Morier's submission for financial support, he knew it was exactly the kind of initiative they were looking to support.

"Our sense was that it was clear that the community was rallying behind the project, by taking part in it, and by enjoying it. That's when you know it's going to have impact in the long term and that is what we were looking for," Todd said.

The money has furthered the project's appeal for participants and volunteers.

"We are budgeting to buy new quality tools, so that they can be used for a long time. The benches are used but they are in good shape," Morier explained.

A tool shed has been purchased as part of another fundraising initiative.

Morier said the projects motto "Help Yourself" has multiple meanings but she added its most basic message is self-explanatory.

"We want the families of North Central to come and help themselves to fresh vegetables, and see what can be accomplished with team work," she said.

She added that without volunteers, such as the Rainbow Youth Centre, the project could not continue.

"After the rain we had this spring, which was wonderful for the gardens, the weeds just



CREDIT: Bryan Schlosser, Leader-Post

Jan Morier at one of the community gardens in the North Central.

shot up and we were wondering how we were going to get it all done. We were thankful for the volunteers who showed up to help."

Taking part in planting and caring of four gardens for the community project is just a start for Morier.

"I'd like to see a greenhouse, market gardens, ideas for expansion on this project just keep growing. We'll have to see," she said.

She points out that taking part in the work of the garden has a therapeutic value to those who've come to either plant, water, pull weeds, build raised beds and make and paint markers and signs.

"It has been wonderful to see those who come to just reconnect with their childhoods, and to get down and reconnect with the earth. It's a way to have time to think and do something beneficial for your neighbours," she said.

The gardens are located on vacant lots on the 1300 blocks of Rae, Retallick, Robinson and Garnet streets.

Besides the North Central garden, Greenest City Toronto and Bayville Memorial Park Stream restoration in the Township of Oro-Medonte, Ont. were chosen.

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