

Community soccer fields will benefit from \$1,500 gift

Katie Brickman
The Huron Expositor

Seaforth Public School is the recipient of a \$1,500 cheque from Gore Mutual Insurance Company through the Foundation for Enriching Education in Perth Huron. The money will be going towards purchasing large shade trees and benches to be placed around the soccer fields.

"We are pleased to partner with Seaforth Insurance Broker Ltd. to support this important organization and the good work they do for their community," stated Kevin McNeil, President and CEO of Gore Mutual Insurance.

Cheryl Peach, principal on leave of Seaforth Public School, spearheaded the idea of bringing more naturalization to the school and spoke to Parent Council about looking for donations.

Joanne Williamson, chair of the Parent Council and an insurance broker in Seaforth, contacted Gore Mutual for a donation. Three years ago, Gore Mutual Insurance donated \$2,000 to the Seaforth Co-operative Children's Centre to purchase new playground equipment.

"Gore is one of the greenest companies



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Accepting a cheque of \$1,500 from Mark Young, of Gore Mutual Insurance Company are in back, Grade 6 teacher Robyn Carnochan, students Micah Kipfer, Skylar Holmes, Sarah MacGregor, Ian MacGregor and Grade 8 teacher Sarah Gerber and in front, SOAR teacher Shannon Empson, students Nolan Johnston, Ben Henderson, Jared Smith, principal on leave Cheryl Peach and Parent Council chair Joanne Williamson.

out there; everything in their office is paperless. Gore is looking for community initiatives," said Williamson. "Both times I have asked I have received the money. It's been a good fit"

Travel and house league soccer teams use the community fields at Seaforth Public School as well. Trees were planted

shortly after the public school moved into the former high school building, but not enough to keep the kids protected as they are now out for longer periods of time. Instead of having three recesses, students now get two 40-minute breaks, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

"We like to give money to those communities and people that are important to our brokers," said Mark Young, Gore Mutual Relations Manager who was on hand to deliver the cheque to the school.

Also providing grant money was Sustainable Huron who is also participating in this initiative, building on their Schoolyard Planting Project. The Huron County Sustainability Plan was developed in partnership with the Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authorities. Peach explained that throughout the school year, the students from all grades are studying various issues pertaining to the naturalization issues, such as soil studies, mapping/landscaping, and plant and animal identification. According to a press release, the Schoolyard Planting Project is geared to improving the quality of existing natural areas, providing shade and wind protection, fostering natural environment and ecological awareness, providing erosion control, and engaging youth to create meaningful change.

"Over the year, staff, students, parents, and our community partners have worked together to deepen our understanding of the issues facing our society and school regarding health, environment, aboriginal education, school culture, character education, and sustainability," Peach said.

Students have also learnt about energy reduction, recycling, composting and waste reduction.

"Our goal, as a school was to have classes involved in creating two naturalized areas - one on our primary yard and beside the Seaforth Day Care, as well as one on our junior yard. This goal is coming to fruition through the support of many grants," said Peach.

SPS receives donation for environmental initiative

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According to Peach, the naturalization project will begin with in-class workshops on June 17, delivered by Stratford landscaper, Jane Eligh-Feryn and local Conservation Authorities (CA).

"Together Ms. Eligh-Feryn and the CA's will teach students about naturalized and local landscapes, the tree planting process, and the benefits of taking action for ecological sustainability in our schoolyard," explained Peach.

Williamson stated that when the planting process begins in the fall that she and fellow insurance broker Chris Cardno would be involved.

"As a parent, now the kids will have a place out of the sun, especially when they are out for longer periods of time and as a soccer mom, it will be good to

be out of the sun. It will make it better looking area and it will benefit the daycare," said Williamson.

The grants, totaling \$9,000 was donated by Sustainable Huron, Gore Mutual Insurance Company (in cooperation with Seaforth Insurance Broker Ltd.), Metro Stores, Ministry of Education Speak Up Grant, Southwestern Regional Cancer Prevention, Foundation for Education Huron/Perth, TD Canada Trust Friends of the Environment, and Seaforth Public School Ecoteam fundraising initiatives.

"Seaforth Public School is very excited and appreciative of all the support they have received and are proud to be part of a project that will further strengthen the connections with nature, and fostering awareness of the importance of respecting and preserving the web of life," explained Peach.