

Making schools greener, one basil leaf at a time

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Education is an essential element of the awareness and understanding required to be environmentally conscious, so it's no surprise that private schools have become a breeding ground for sustainable thinkers — and, more importantly, doers.

“Sustainability is important to me because if not me, then who?” said Annette Klar, a student at Lower Canada College who's entering the school's pre-university program this fall. “Small projects at a high school in Montreal won't stop greenhouse gas emissions, but they will raise awareness in the student body and inspire teenagers to fight for our planet.”

Klar first joined LCC's Green

Team, after moving from Australia to Quebec a year and a half ago, as a way to meet new people and make friends. It wasn't until one of her new friends — MariaLuisa Vignano, another LCC student who is entering the pre-university program this fall — suggested the idea of a Sustainable Greenhouse Growing System Initiative (SGGSI) that she became fully involved.

“Out of all the projects that the Green Team conducts, I think that the greenhouse is definitely what I'm most proud of,” Klar said. “It was a year-long fight with the weather to keep our plants alive and whilst at the end of the onslaught we only had a few stragglers living, I've never tasted better basil.”

Vignano, who's been an LCC stu-

dent for the past five years, says the school always encouraged her to take an active and leading role in sustainability.

“With the help of Annie, my main partner in the SGGSI, we transformed the LCC greenhouse to grow produce that can be used directly by the school's kitchen and our community — at food banks, for example,” she said.

Jean-François Maurice, who teaches French and history and is the school's sustainable development co-ordinator, points to a number of other initiatives — like We Walk for Water, and a project with Monarch Watch — aimed at making the school greener.

“Following what we started last year, a one-page report which describes the school's CO₂ pro-



Young Selwyn House students put some muscle into the school's gardening program. PHOTO COURTESY OF SELWYN HOUSE

duction was produced,” Maurice said. “A consultant will examine the report and develop a strategy to help us reach our goal of becoming carbon neutral.”

At Selwyn House, where they started recycling more than 30 years ago — before it was commonplace — a lot of work goes into educating both students and teachers

about paper waste.

“We really ask everyone to look at how they use printer paper. We use Google Classroom, so there's a lot less printing, and Grade 5 and 6 students are using iPads, so we've reduced our paper usage a lot,” said Kathy Funamoto, the head of Selwyn House's elementary school.

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