



The Green Door

Citizens Supporting Ontario's Prosperous and Sustainable Future

The Yorklands Green Hub Newsletter

| August 2015 |

Number 4



YGH Jane's Walk: discovery and conversations about our vision for a special heritage site.

Jane's Walks Bring New Visitors to Yorklands Site

Enthusiastic groups of participants turned out to hear stories of the past at the Guelph Correctional Centre when Yorklands Green Hub (YGH) hosted their second annual walking tour there this May. The goal of Jane's Walks, a growing international movement of free citizen-led tours, is to encourage discovery of and conversations about significant local urban features. At this year's YGH walks, keen groups of walkers brimmed with questions, eager to learn about the former corrections centre and the Yorklands Green Hub vision for its future use as an ecological and sustainability institution.

Inspired by and honouring writer and urban activist Jane Jacobs, Guelph joined cities around the world on May 2nd and 3rd to showcase special places in and around its downtown. YGH's goals for a sustainable future align well with the walks' community based philosophy of urban development.

The GCC site is being readied by the province for sale in the near future. YGH members and supporters hope to see plans for an ecological centre on this heritage site realized soon. ■

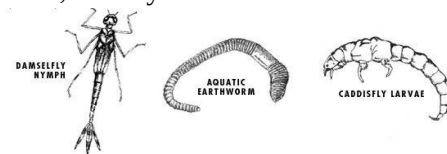
"Bugging" the Eramosa to Rate its Health



Bob Giza and Pete Davis of Ontario Streams show their collection of benthic (bottom) creatures, at a YGH event at the 2 Rivers Festival in June.

How does a river get a health check-up? Guelph's 2 Rivers Festival in June offered Yorklands Green Hub an ideal opportunity to share some educational activity on assessing the health of one the city's two beautiful rivers, the Eramosa.

One way of rating the health of an aquatic ecosystem is through the collecting and assessment of bottom "bugs" whose presence is an indicator of its water quality. On June 13, YGH member Bob Giza, president of Ontario Streams (an endorsing YGH group), and their biologist Pete Davis provided a fun and interactive activity demonstrating an Ontario Ministry of the Environment protocol on benthic (bottom) creature monitoring. They showed participants of all ages how to collect, identify and quantify an assortment of small river-bottom invertebrates. As these "indicator species" are not tolerant of pollution, their presence in the river is a sign of clean, healthy water.



Water quality and conservation is one of the three key YGH focuses. Clythe Creek, which flows through the Yorklands Green Hub site then runs into the Eramosa River, a tributary of the Grand River, which was designated one of Canada's Heritage Rivers twenty years ago. As stewards of the land, we also wish to be stewards of local healthy waters. Part of doing that involves teaching others to be better aware of water quality in our watersheds. Meeting indicator creatures was a special activity which whole families enjoyed. The experience gave them a first-hand look at how we can rate our local water quality. YGH will be repeating this activity for the public at future water events. ■

Yorklands Green Hub: Bringing Forward an Agricultural Legacy

Contributed by Mary Anne Young, OALA

In Guelph, a city known for its agricultural heritage, a new initiative is taking shape that has the potential to turn the community into a leader in diverse small-scale agricultural initiatives. In the footsteps of other Guelph-based urban and organic agricultural endeavours, a group of dedicated volunteers are working to create a self-sustaining education, demonstration, and research hub known as the **Yorklands Green Hub**. The project will include space for a diversity of interest groups to diffuse knowledge and initiate research with a focus on local, sustainable, and affordable food initiatives.

The Yorklands Green Hub (YGH) would be built on a portion of the former Guelph Correctional Center lands, which are located on the Eramosa River on Guelph's east side. The Guelph Correctional Center, also known as the Ontario Reformatory, was an operational prison from 1910 to 2002, which included a working farm developed and operated by inmates. The goal of the Reformatory was to reform inmates by teaching them useful life skills rather than simply punishing them for their crimes. The concept of bringing forward a living history of reform by drawing on the site's agricultural history has been an inspiration for the YGH since the project's inception.



The barn at the old Ontario Reformatory.

Immediate goals for the YGH are:

1. *To secure 47 acres of land for diverse small-scale agricultural initiatives,*
2. *To secure designation of the former superintendent's house and gate house for demonstration and/or activity centres, and*
3. *To secure designation of the administration building for a provincial exhibition site for best practices of environmental innovators, related businesses, NGOs, and outdoor and historical educators.*

The YGH visions of innovation, collaboration, and education are planned to be implemented by a wide variety of projects; current proposals for programming on the site include new farmer training, permaculture gardens, school group activities, an apiary, stream and wetland restoration, fishing education, an orchard and cider mill, and office space for environmental groups and other NGOs.

The project has the support of the Mayor of Guelph, Cam Guthrie, along with many other notable endorsers. A major fundraising effort commenced in spring 2015, funds (con't on page 3)

What is the Yorklands Green Hub?

The Yorklands Green Hub is a non-partisan citizens' group that is promoting the creation of an Ontario sustainable eco-centre at the former Guelph Correctional Centre (GCC). This will be a self-sustaining forum where institutions, groups and sustainable businesses can come together in a structured setting. Through indoor and outdoor displays, rotating exhibits, demonstrations, lectures, videos and resource materials this centre will promote greater understanding of the importance of and possibilities for making the change towards a low-emissions, climate-stable future.

Yorklands Green Hub 2015 Board of Directors

Norah Chaloner

John Dennis

Val Morse

Neil Blair

Eduardo Garay

Bryan McPherson

Colette Mesher

Gerry Stephenson

You can contact YGH at info@yorklandsgreenhub.ca

Agricultural Legacy (con't from p.2)
from which will go towards purchasing the site from the Ministry of Infrastructure Ontario.

Norah Chaloner, of the YGH Board of Directors, speaks passionately about this project and its potential for positive impact on the Guelph community: "I've worked on a lot of projects in my life, but I've never worked on anything so positive."■

Mary Anne Young, OALA, CSLA is a landscape architect and terrestrial ecologist who works for Dougan & Associates Ecological Consulting & Design in Guelph, Ontario. Her design specialties include ecological restoration and the use of native plants, and she loves gardening of all kinds.

Special Feature

YGH People

The Yorklands Green Hub vision attracts many different kinds of special people. In this issue we'd like to share some thoughts and interests of one of them with our readers. - Ed.

Gerry Stephenson of Drumlin Farm: A Farm from the Past to the Future

Drumlin Farm on Watson Road in Puslinch, south of Guelph, is a bucolic but busy place. After you drive down the long curving driveway on food share pickup day, you may walk through a happy gaggle of young chickens on the lawn, look out over rows of growing organic vegetables, get to try a sample of "sun tea" (mint and sage on my visit), and find out how Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) works first hand. And you may meet organic farmer Gerry Stephenson as he presides over the pickup of his quality produce; his

summer subscribers come to load their weekly crates from a posted list of the harvest for that week.

As the news from around the world – and California in particular – tells us that droughts are beginning to hit areas on which we depend for much of our imported produce, the availability of local food becomes increasingly compelling. The success of local, organic Canadian agriculture will depend as much on knowledgeable, invested consumers as on the dedicated farmers who make it possible. Both Gerry Stephenson and the Yorklands Green Hub wish to grow the market for local sustainable agriculture. We asked Gerry, a newly-elected YGH board member, about Drumlin Farm.



Drumlin Farm organic farmer Gerry Stephenson and some of his free-ranging chickens.

YGH: You are the owner of an organic farm and run a Community Shared Agriculture program. Could you describe what led you into this line of work?

GS: We purchased the farm 20 years ago to satisfy a horse-passionate family. When our then 21 year old son was diagnosed with a brain tumour, we decided to switch to organic food, end the conventional farm contract we had, and grow our own. With that shortly came the rehabilitation of the

land and the planting of thousands of trees.

YGH: What environmental issues concern you most, and how do you feel helping people eat organic and local are part of their solutions?

GS: We are poisoning the land. There still seems to be an 'Old Testament' attitude towards the planet and the need to dominate, to subdue. Organic growing can solve some of those issues, and if done well, feed the planet.

YGH: What led you to join the Yorklands Green Hub - and how would you like to relate your agricultural work to YGH goals?

GS: As a long-time educator now getting close to 60 years of age, I still love to teach. Drumlin Farm has taught me many lessons. While we all need to make mistakes, we can't keep making the same ones. The land has been terribly abused and needs to live again. For too many years, we have walked away from depleted lands; we have to stop doing that. The land can live with gentle nurturing, sustainable (con't on page 4)



**Become a
YGH
Member!**

We're now a membership organization. And we need a strong membership to realize our vision. We invite you to move from being an endorser to becoming a YGH member - as an individual or as a group. Your input as a member is vitally important as we create this exciting new public green hub.

Join online today at:

<http://www.yorklandsgreenhub.ca/become-member/>

Drumlin Farm (con't)

care, and more involvement from the citizens of greater Guelph.

YGH: How do you feel that sustainable urban agriculture can contribute to a greener future for Canada? And how best might a Yorklands Green Hub promote that vision?

GS: Despite what conventional agriculture proponents espouse, organic agriculture *can* feed the world, is sustainable, and really is the *only* way the human race will survive. We live by example: already in 2015, people are too far removed from food, don't know how to grow it and, don't know what they are eating. Yorklands is close to Drumlin Farm; it can be the perfect, local teaching centre. Drumlin Farm is an experiment, as is the Yorklands Green Hub project. The joy we have gained from rebuilding our farm environment can be replicated at Yorklands. "...all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small..."

To find out more about Drumlin Farm and local Community Shared Agriculture, visit www.drumlinfarm.ca/

Guelph Elevator Project 2015: Another YGH Win!

This year, at the Big Show in May at the River Run Centre, it was another Elevator Project win for the growingly-popular YGH eco-centre proposal. In the 2015 finals, the project of creating a Green Hub was awarded a prize with a total value of \$4,450: \$3,950 of in-kind donations, and \$500 pledged.

The Guelph Elevator Project is a group of "matchmakers for community good," and was

created to link up investors – of time, skills, advice and materials as well as funds – with Idea Makers poised to make a unique contribution that benefits the community. We are proud and grateful to be among their winners.

The Yorklands Green Hub would especially like to thank Sage Solutions, Innovation Guelph, Barking Dog Studio and 10 Carden Street (our own centre for social innovation!) for their contributions to this important community development project. We look forward to the next steps in our corporate development, updates to our website, and launching a major fundraising campaign to purchase the 47-acre site that will house our unique environmental restoration, demonstration and education centre.

Volunteer with Yorklands Green Hub!



Our organization is an all-volunteer citizens' group. This opens up great opportunities for our members to share knowledge and skills - and help us achieve our dream of a unique public eco-centre in Guelph.

We invite and encourage you to join us! You can reach us [here](#)...to sign up.



Don't Miss Our....

Drumlin Farm Harvest Brunch
Sunday, August 23, 2015
11:30am to 2:00pm

- Delicious from-the-farm food
- Community
- Farm Tour
- Pay what you can: Proceeds to the Yorklands Green Hub.

Reserve your place now!

This special event is limited to maximum 100 guests.

RSVP to:

drumlinfarm@xplornet.ca

Map to the farm at

<http://www.drumlinfarm.ca/content/contact-us>

"The Green Door" is a publication of the Yorklands Green Hub Communications and Outreach Committee.

We welcome news, articles and letters. Each must include the author's name and full contact information.

We reserve the right to refuse or edit all submissions. Questions should be directed to the editor or a member of the Board of Directors at info@yorklandsgreenhub.ca