

Kids plant garden

By KURT HAUGLIE, DMG Writer
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Kurt Hauglie/Daily Mining Gazette
From left, Suzette Mihelich works in a garden at C-L-K Elementary School in Calumet with her sons Ty, 6, and Jacob, 10, Mihelich.



CALUMET - Susan Oleson and her three children were picking weeds around the frame for a raised garden bed at C-L-K Elementary School Saturday, an experience that wasn't entirely new for her.

"We used to have a garden (when we lived) in Minnesota," she said. "Now we have a herb container garden."

The Oleson family was taking part in the school's Heritage Garden Project, which involved a list of projects needed to get it ready for spring planting.

"My son brought a paper home from school (explaining the project), and he wanted to do it," she said.

One of the teachers organizing the event was Melissa Schneiderhan, who said the garden, which was created last spring, is funded mainly by a grant from the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative. The purpose of the grant is to teach students how actions they take can affect the Lake Superior watershed.

Schneiderhan said the garden uses an intensive raised-bed planting method, and water-conservation efforts. Vegetables are grown organically, also.

This year, Schneiderhan said the garden project has further funding from the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department's Building Healthy Communities program and the National Gardening Association's Adopt-A-School-Garden program.

"They (the health department) are now our community partners," she said.

Having a community partner is a requirement of the LSSI grant, Schneiderhan said.

Students involved with the garden project also visit the Hughes Farm, which uses organic growing methods, Schneiderhan said. The Michigan State University Extension and the Keweenaw National Historical Park are involved, also.

Schneiderhan said she would like to get older residents involved who may have worked gardens during the copper-mining period in the early and mid 20th century.

"Part of this is trying to save the community gardening heritage," she said. "A lot of the knowledge belongs to the elders."

The C-L-K garden started with eight beds, Schneiderhan said, but with the extra funding, the plan was to expand it.

"We're adding 24 new raised beds," she said.

The list of "to do" projects for the Saturday effort included mixing soil, removing grass and weeds from the raised garden beds, moving the composter nearer to the garden beds, building another three-bin composter, fixing fences and building gates for the garden area, and staining the tool shed and gazebo.

Last year about 100 people took part in creating the garden, and Schneiderhan said she was expecting about the same Saturday.

The garden program started last year with just a few teachers and their classes, but Schneiderhan said there are more interested now.

"Nineteen more teachers want their own bed boxes for their classes," she said.

The students get the vegetables from the beds they work, Schneiderhan said, but this year six local families will be working beds and they will get the vegetables they grow.

"We provide all the plants and seeds," she said. "We water it. All they have to do is harvest it."

Schneiderhan said although students harvested vegetables during and at the end of the growing season last year, the harvest wasn't exactly what was hoped for.

"We didn't get enough to make a meal," she said. "That's the goal this year."

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