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THE VOICE OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS SINCE 1897

# One-stop shop for social action coming to the ETSB

By Matthew McCully

Along with the new school year comes a new project, spearheaded by the Appalachian Teachers' Association (ATA), to create a web platform to share social action initiatives undertaken by schools in the Eastern Townships School board (ETSB).

"Our schools are doing so many amazing things," said teacher and ATA officer Gail Klinck, who is coordinating the project.

The goal of the new website is to bring all of the different social action events and projects taking place throughout the ETSB to one place, to serve as an example to peers and share students' accomplishments with the greater community.

Klink explained that the new project will be the ETSB's answer to the *Etablissement vert Brundtland* (EVB) movement, initiated in the French sector in the 1990s.

The EVB movement is a network of education and health institutions that participate in meaningful projects, acting on four pillars of conscientious global citizenship: the environment, peaceful conduct, solidarity and democracy.

"It never really made the leap to the English system," Klink said. While they appreciated the idea behind the EVB movement, Klinck said that the process to certify a school was lengthy, and many ETSB schools were too small or lacked the resources to meet the criteria for EVB.

Klink said the new website hopes to house all the activities going on in the ETSB, large or small, related to social

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# One-stop shop

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action. Eventually, awards will be created to recognize the work done by students, teachers and schools.

Funding for the project is a three-way split between the ATA, the ETSB, and the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT), Klinck said.

"We're hoping to serve as a model for other unions," she said, pointing to other areas of Quebec like the Gaspé, with small schools doing big things. "This way, they could celebrate what they do," Klinck commented, adding they could easily tweak the model to their own needs.

To give an example of the type of activity that would be included on the new website, Klinck referred to Mansonville Elementary School.

"It's a tiny little school," she said. Each spring, the school plants a garden with help from the neighbouring French school. Throughout the summer, the garden is tended by community members and kids participating in summer programs that take place at the school. In the fall, a harvest party is thrown to share the bounty.

"That's a community building project," Klinck said. "You plant it, you tend it, you eat it."

"I think the challenge is for teachers and students to take that extra step and get outside their own schools," Klinck said.

"It's hard for schools to get information out past their own walls," she went on, "there is a lot of stuff happening at Massey-Vanier that parents just don't know about." Klinck referred to a campaign at MVHS where students were collecting the tabs from the tops of cans to send to another student in Montreal, who is using them to make bracelets and fundraise for various charities.

"Sometimes we run ourselves down," said Klinck, "we do so many amazing things to be proud of."

Klinck believes the new website will help kids reach further out into the world and develop a sense of global community, pride and citizenship.

"One of the things we have to do is name it," Klinck said. When the website goes online one of the first things she will do is have students

submit possible names for the project.

In addition to sharing the accomplishments of the ETSB community, Klinck said she would like to provide links on the website to resources that could help schools and classes get funding and support for new social action initiatives.

Klinck said the as soon as the website is live, the link will be made available through the ATA, ETSB and QPAT websites and social media.