

One Tomato harvests award

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The Observer

A grassroots project designed to inspire residents to grow vegetables, eat local, and donate fresh food to local food banks is \$5,000 richer this week.

The One Tomato Project, spearheaded by Megan O'Neil and Darren Hakker in 2009, was honoured Thursday with the 2011 Suncor Sustainability Award, which recognizes local individuals and organizations for their contributions towards social equity, ecological integrity and economic prosperity in Sarnia-Lambton.

"We're thrilled," said O'Neil. "I didn't expect to win. We're outside the box; we're grassroots; we're different."

"We know that we make a difference," Hakker added. "But we didn't know it was enough to win this. It's such a great thing."

Through the creation of community gardens and educational endeavours, the One Tomato Project has promoted sustainability, distributed plants and encouraged children to eat local and healthy, with more than 25 local organizations involved to date.

The win also comes just in time to help fund the group's latest initiative, "Food Works," a pilot project being launched this month in four area schools, teaching Grade 7 students to cook, make healthy food choices, meet with professionals in the food industry, and understand the origins of the food they eat.

A portion of the project, in partnership with Lambton-Kent Ag-in-the-

Classroom, has been funded by the Sarnia Community Foundation, but both O'Neil and Hakker had been scrambling to come up with more funding.

"Eventually, we hope to be in every 7th Grade class in Lambton County," said O'Neil.

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Darren Hakker

The award was designed by Suncor Energy and the Bluewater Sustainability Initiative (BSI) as an incentive to challenge the community to foster the next generation of sustainability innovators and implementers.

Past winners include Terra Industries (2010), Shawn McKnight (2009) and Goodwill Industries N Essex, Kent, Lambton Inc. (2008).

The Bluewater Sustainability Initiative is an organization striving to have Sarnia-Lambton recognized worldwide as a hybrid, green community.

For more information, visit www.bluewatersustainabilityinitiative.ca.

To learn about the One Tomato Project, visit www.onetomato.org.

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