

Hampton student honoured for environmental leadership

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Grade 12 student Olivia DesRoches, far left, was honoured Thursday by Nature Canada for her role in leading a greenhouse project at Hampton High School. From left: Olivia DesRoches, Sheefra Brisbin, board member of Nature Canada, New Brunswick Lt.-Gov. Jocelyne Roy-Vienneau and Susan Eaton, board member of Nature Canada.

Photo: Tiffany Lewis/Kings County Record

HAMPTON • A Grade 12 high school student stood alongside the lieutenant-governor of the province Thursday as the student was awarded for her role in environmental leadership in her community.

Olivia DesRoches, a senior at Hampton High School, received the Young Women for Nature Award from Nature Canada for her stake in spearheading the building of a greenhouse at the school to help students better understand plants and nature.

In a speech at the unveiling of the new sign for the structure, DesRoches said she hopes the project can influence positive environmental change.

“Our earth needs our help and I believe the only way we can accomplish this is starting with simple steps,” she said. “This greenhouse is just one small item to contribute to bettering our environment, however, my hope is that it will inspire others to begin to make changes within their school communities and to become more environmentally friendly.”

Lt.-Gov. Jocelyne Roy-Vienneau was also present as she became a new member of the Women for Nature initiative, an initiative that unites influential women who choose to show their passion for nature and push for change, according to a press release.

Roy-Vienneau said it is an honour to become a member of the group.

“Nature is part of who I am, so it was natural for me to be apart of that. And I’m also pushing very hard in order for women to get involved in environmental issues,” she said.

DesRoches received applause from the lieutenant-governor for taking action to improve the environment.

“For me, it’s very refreshing to see young people like Olivia get involved,” Roy-Vienneau said. There are so many good things happening in New Brunswick and so many young people getting involved in environmental projects and Olivia is just one example. For me, the future is in good hands.”

After DesRoches and her Grade 11 math class brainstormed ways of improving the environment last year, the idea of building a greenhouse was born. DesRoches had received a \$1,000 grant from Women for Nature to put towards the project along with \$500 from a video contest her class had won. The school also received support from the town of Hampton who provided a backhoe and an operator to level the grounds the greenhouse will be built on.

Bob Peart, chair of Nature Canada, said seeing DesRoches’ leadership is moving.

“What I really find inspiring about people like [Olivia] is that it’s a bit of a sad place right now in the world if you kind of look around,” he said. “So the hope and the inspiration is in people like Olivia and the community. You can just see this project going forward and I find that very inspiring.”

As the student looks ahead to prepare for graduation, she said she hopes the greenhouse can leave a lasting impact on the community.

“I hope that the greenhouse project can continue on after I leave and that someone in one of the younger grades will be willing to pick the project up and just pour all of themselves into the project,” she said. “As well, [I hope it] continues to inspire the school and Hampton to care about the environment and to better the environment so that we can create more of a positive future and continue to make an impact on our community.”