

Chocolate for trees is new concept for school



Staff photo by Fred Loek

Hillside Middle School grade eight students launched the Chocolate 4 Trees fundraiser yesterday. The program is part of the Social Justice program and promotes fair trade. Participants include, from left, Kurt Armstrong, Grade 8 teacher Angela Pretorius, Moe Assi, Viola Iskander, Denille Johnson, Erin Maguire, Maleeka Guha and Rabab Syed.

By: Julie Slack

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Many schools hold fundraisers to finance a new playground, or purchase books for the library.

Hillside Middle School in Clarkson is raising funds for the environment. And even the fundraiser

itself, which kicks off with an assembly today is environmentally friendly.

It's like healthy eating meets social justice. The school has partnered with Fundtastic Fundraising, a socially responsible fundraising company that is helping students sell all-natural chocolate bars certified by the Rainforest Alliance.

The certification ensures the chocolate wasn't produced by children in sweat shops. It also ensures that life in Costa Rica rainforest wasn't disrupted for the harvesting of cacao trees.

Meanwhile, Fundtastic has also partnered with Trees Canada, a charitable organization that works to improve our quality of life by planting and caring for trees.

Trees Canada supplies Hillside students with trees that to plant.

"There's nothing bad about this chocolate," said Grade 8 student Moe Assi. "There are no chemicals in it. It's not produced by children. It's very satisfying. Even the cardboard boxes we sell from are made from recycled products."

Cacao harvested from rainforest farms in Costa Rica is sent to Belgium where it is made into chocolate. It's then sent to southern Ontario, where it is transformed into Nature's Treasures chocolate bars.

The milk chocolate bars are made from 38 per cent cocoa as opposed to the 10 per cent normally found in commercially produced bars, said Hillside Grade 8 student Erin Maguire. And, the chocolate is peanut and nut free.

"But when you go to grab your favourite chocolate bar, like Mars or a KitKat, you're not usually thinking, 'I wonder if some kid made this,'" Maguire said. "With this product you know it couldn't be someone my age or younger making it."

Each of the 550 students at Hillside will be asked to sell a box of 30 chocolate bars. If the student sells all 30 bars, the school gets a tree. The bars are \$2.50 each.

Hillside principal Lynn Eagle said Hillside is the first school in Canada to participate in such a fundraiser.

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