

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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KW Habilitation Joins Local Food Movement

Through a newly formed partnership exploring on-site food production, [KW Habilitation](#) (KW Hab) has joined the local food movement. Working in the community for over 40 years, KW Hab offers a wide range of individualized services and supports to children and adults with developmental disabilities. KW Hab is participating in [Project SOIL](#) (Shared Opportunities on Institutional Land), a province-wide feasibility study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agri-culture and Food (OMAF).

Headed by Dr. Phil Mount from Wilfrid Laurier University and [My Sustainable Canada](#), Project SOIL explores the potential of onsite food production at public health and educational institutions throughout Ontario. Mount explains, “On-site food production is a simple way to generate revenue and put fresh food in the kitchens, but our partners will also use it as a way to provide therapeutic benefits, save on grounds-keeping budgets, and provide skills training and education.” With the findings of this study Mount hopes to shed light on the economic and institutional viability of on-site food production.



In 2011, a group of community volunteers approached KW Hab about turning their 8-acre property of farmland, located at their David Fisher Residence (DFR), into a productive organic farm. Excited by the possibilities, KW Hab agreed and the Our Farm partnership was formed. The mission of this new initiative is to build a community of people connected to the land, their food and each other through hands on experience with sustainable farming.

In the 2013 growing season, a quarter-acre of the farmland was cultivated with 20 different vegetables. For the 2014 growing season the project has expanded to increase the scale of production at the DFR location, while adding new production at KW Hab’s 115 University Ave. location. [Young City Growers](#), a grassroots initiative creating urban agricultural opportunities for youth, will oversee the farming responsibilities. This location will feature a fully accessible 6750 square-foot micro-urban farm.

KW Hab plans to distribute the food grown onsite amongst their residences in Waterloo Region and supply the new social café at their 99 Ottawa Street location with fresh fruits

and vegetables. Jenny Weickert, of KW Hab, explains “the food we grow at our sites will be used for distribution between our 23 homes and our new Café, where food will be sold such as soups, sandwiches, and salads. We also have several programs in our agency that will benefit from the production. For example, our Community Participation and Employment Supports provide job coaching for people who work in the community. The produce grown on-site could be used in training for placements involving food handling and preparation. The excess will be turned into sauces, jams, salsa and other preserves that will also be distributed to our locations.”

These new onsite food production projects provide many benefits to the organization and to the people KW Hab serves. These benefits include increased social inclusion; community development and partnerships; skills development and employment opportunities; and the creation of a place to foster learning and knowledge exchange. In early October, Our Farm will host a public workshop, led by well-known permaculturist Mark Sheppard, at the David Fisher Residence site.

For more information on [Project SOIL](#) and the [KW Habilitation](#) pilot locations, please contact Elena Christy at echristy@uoguelph.ca

Other participating Project SOIL pilot institutions include the [Food School Farm](#) at Centre Wellington District High School in Fergus, [GreenWerks Garden](#) at Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital in Thunder Bay, [Homewood Health Centre](#) in Guelph, and [Hôpital Glengarry Memorial Hospital](#) in Alexandria.



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD