



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Free Play Forest gives youngest students a safe place to explore nature



Caption: Kindergarten students from Codrington Public School, Barrie, officially opened the new free play forest at Tiffin Centre for Conservation, Utopia, on October 25, 2017

UTOPIA, Ontario (October 27, 2017) – Kindergarten students from Codrington Public School in Barrie officially opened the new free play forest at Tiffin Centre for Conservation in Utopia earlier this week.

With funding from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) constructed the free play area as a safe place for young students to play in the forest with limited supervision. Logs, poles and other natural materials in the area allow children’s creativity to “run wild.”

NVCA staff designed the one acre, treed space with nature in mind using a honeycomb-pattern fence. A number of students volunteered to install the fencing over the spring and summer, including grade 4 to 6 students from Codrington Public School.

“Each year we have more than 12,000 students take part in our outdoor education program at the Tiffin Centre,” said Byron Wesson, director of lands, education and stewardship services with the NVCA. “The free play forest allows our youngest students to explore the wonders of woods on their own without fear of them getting lost.”

The free play forest strikes a balance between providing a natural space for young visitors while maintaining habitat for the animals that frequent the area. Bunnies, bard owls, mice, raccoons, porcupines, squirrels, chipmunks, and deer rely on this patch of forest for food and shelter.

With more than 300 acres of forests, meadows and wetlands, the Tiffin Centre for Conservation is a year-round destination for outdoor recreation and home to the NVCA's education program.

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About NVCA: The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority is a public agency dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment through specialized programs to protect, conserve and enhance our water, wetlands, forests and lands. www.nvca.on.ca

About TD Friends of the Environment Foundation: Founded by TD Bank Group in 1990, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (TD FEF) is a national charity that funds environmental projects across Canada. With the support of more than 180,000 donors, TD FEF has provided approximately \$82 million to over 24,000 environmental projects and programs. www.tdfef.com

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