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Peace Medallion winner

Her gardens are growing around the world

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So Julia Morton-Marr, how does your garden grow?

The Mississauga woman's idea for planting peace gardens at schools is a global success story that has earned her a YMCA Peace Medallion.

The 56-year-old world traveler and

educator won't be found at the United Nations, though. She lives in Erin Mills.

Morton-Marr is one of six GTA residents who will receive the Peace Medallion during YMCA World Peace Week. The award comes from the Mississauga branch of the YMCA and recognizes her International School Peace Gardens program.

She was nominated by Mississauga

resident Doug Moore.

Begun in 1994, the program incorporates many subjects, like environmental studies and conflict resolution, with the building and use of peace gardens at schools.

A peace garden, which is traditionally a home to a pair of benches, is a place where people go to leave behind external conflict.

The idea stemmed from Morton-Marr's environmental research, her involvement in a global conference on tourism and peace and 20 years of experience as an Australian educator.

Her idea took off in Canada and globally when it became included in Canada's 125 anniversary and United Nations 50th anniversary celebrations.

Several local schools now have peace gardens such as the one built recently at St. Francis of Assisi School, along with 3,500 schools in 31 countries from New Zealand to Africa.

Morton-Marr was "on the ceiling" about receiving the award.

"What can I say, it was nice that they thought I made a difference," she said.

Born of British parents in South Africa, Morton-Marr has lived in Sri Lanka, England and Australia, where she taught before a back injury forced her into retirement. She now lives in Mississauga with her husband, Fraser.

Morton-Marr said she's inspired to improve the world for her seven grandchildren in Australia. There, she said, kids must always wear a hat to protect their skin against the effects of the depleted ozone layer.

"I'm delighted at the possibility of spreading this message. I don't see this as just my medallion," she said, sharing the credit with others who have helped along the way.



Staff photo by Rob Beintema
Erin Mills resident Julia Morton-Marr stands by one of the first peace trees planted at St. Peter's Anglican Church. Morton-Marr is set to receive a YMCA Peace Medallion from the Mississauga YMCA for her International School Peace Gardens program.