



*Wrapped in purple ribbon, the new community garden behind the Voorheesville Elementary School is ready to be opened. Fifth-grader Tommy Gallagher cut the ribbon. He earned the honor by coming up with the winning name for the garden — Blackbird Paradise. Purple is the school color and the Blackbird it's mascot.*

## “Blackbird Paradise” unveiled on Earth Day 2009

To the Editor:

To the relief of the residents of Voorheesville, sunny skies prevailed on Earth Day 2009 as they gathered to officially open the community's new garden. Local dignitaries, community members, and students convened on the grounds of the Voorheesville Elementary School to participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Blackbird Paradise Garden.

Acting as master of ceremonies, Interim Principal Edward

interested in planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, prepping, and delivering the produce of the garden.

“This is truly a community effort,” Garden Project Co-Chair Lori Dollard added. “Everyone contributed what they could and how they could. From Jerry Parmenter's gift of more than \$10,000 in labor, materials, and equipment to Girl Scout Troop 1304's donation of hard-earned ‘cookie-money,’ we appreciate so much all

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Diegel praised the collaborative effort behind the garden's creation. He went on to introduce key players in the effort, including Bri McAlevey, who served as Garden Project co-chair. Said McAlevey, “Two months ago, I wasn't entirely sure we could pull this project off. We asked the community for a garden we could all share and look at what we have achieved! It shows a lot of community pride and cooperation — pretty close to paradise, if you ask me.”

Fifth-grader Tommy Gallagher apparently agreed when he submitted his entry — “Blackbird Paradise” — in a school-based contest to name the garden. As winner of the contest, Gallagher was on hand to cut the enormous purple ribbon encircling the garden. His fellow students were equally pleased to participate in the ceremonies, first by singing a song in praise of gardening and then by planting Earth Day-inspired “wish-sticks” in the garden.

Students will also participate in the actual planting of the raised-bed garden, under the guidance of Cornell Cooperative Extension master gardeners. The Garden Project Committee welcomes all volunteers

that everyone has done to make this garden come alive.”

Appreciation was also expressed by two future recipients of the produce, herbs, and flowers to be grown in the garden. Ivan Gotham, New Scotland Community Food Pantry chairperson, shared how much he looks forward to the opportunity of offering fresh, local vegetables in the food pantry.

Tim Mulligan, Food Service supervisor for the Voorheesville School District echoed that thought, adding that the children of the district will see a direct connection between their hard work in the garden to the good food on their lunch trays: “It helps me fulfill my goals of heightening the children's nutrition awareness and offering healthy eating choices,” he said.

More information on the Voorheesville Garden Project is available at [vcsd.neric.org](http://vcsd.neric.org). If you would like to be a garden volunteer, send your name, telephone, and days or weeks you'd like to volunteer to [vvillegarden@gmail.com](mailto:vvillegarden@gmail.com).

**Kay Peavey  
Garden Project**

*Editor's note: See related story in the Spring Home and Garden section.*