

VOTE FOR OUR SECRET GARDEN

The Chelmsford College Extended Learning team are bidding to bag a massive cash boost from the Tesco Bags of Help initiative. The department that provides education for young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties is one of the three groups in the East Anglian region to be shortlisted for a top grant.



Jill Twiss, Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Administrator at Chelmsford College, said: "We are very excited and pleased that our Secret Garden project has been shortlisted to receive a grant from Tesco's Bags of Help.

The Secret Garden will provide an opportunity for all students to enjoy and participate in an outdoor active learning experience, from students with profound and multiple disabilities, main stream art, media and catering students, to our younger children at Dovedale Nursery - encouraging outdoor learning at an early age!

"The Secret Garden could also be used as a quiet relaxing area for staff and members of the local community to improve their wellbeing.

"With the funding, our Enterprise programme could be expanded to enable charitable events to be held for our local community, such as coffee mornings, summer fetes and for the use of local art/camera groups."

Tesco has teamed up with Groundwork on its Bags of Help initiative, which see grants of £12,000, £10,000 and £8,000 - all raised from the 5p bag levy - being awarded to environmental and greenspace projects. Three groups in each of Tesco's 416 regions have been shortlisted to receive the cash award and this month shoppers at Chelmsford, Maldon and Tiptree are being invited to head along to Tesco stores to vote for who they think should take away the top

grant.

The Secret Garden project intends to transform a small piece of green space next to the college, which is currently used by disabled students for their gardening activities. There is no wheelchair access or storage for tools and equipment and the lack of paving makes the space inaccessible for many people. Raised beds would allow all students to participate and the development of a sensory area would benefit both physical and emotional wellbeing for all visitors to the garden. The children from Dovedale Nursery use the garden to enjoy nature and this project would most definitely enhance their leisure and learning experience. The team aim to produce organic vegetables, herbs and fruits which could be used in the department's Enterprise programme, cultivating our own plants from seed and promoting biodiversity.

Voting is open in stores from 26th September to 9th October. Customers will cast their vote using a token given to them at the check-out in store each time they shop.

This is the second round of the initiative, the first round saw approximately eight million shoppers vote in stores up and down the country earlier this year. Lindsey Crompton, Head of Community at Tesco, said: "The first round of the Bags of Help initiative was a fantastic success. In total, 1,170 community groups were awarded £8,000, £10,000 or £12,000 - that's a massive £11.7 million being invested into local projects."

"Vote for us!" said one member of the extended learning horticulture group, Kai Barrett, "I want everybody to have a chance from the wise elderly to the young and curious." 19 year old Kai from Terling dreams of opening a video game café serving organic food grown in his own garden: "I'm learning the basics here, the Secret Garden is a blank canvass and we are all excited to imagine what it could be like".