

Growing partnership



The Eldredge Lumber and Hardware family opened their newest location at 1787 Main St. in Sanford in March.

Eldredge Lumber sponsors Landscape & Horticulture Program at SRTC

To the Eldredge family, their new sponsorship is as much about relationship and partnership as it is about financial support.

“Our best ideas come from a collective, so being part of the collective with them we feel is almost equally as great as the money,” said Lindsey Eldredge of Eldredge Lumber. “We’re in the community, and we’re in the industry. We’re here to be a sounding board”

Open since spring, the new Eldredge Lumber & Hardware at 1787 Main St. in Sanford recently signed on to sponsor the Sanford Regional Technical Center’s Landscape & Horticulture Program. The 10-year sponsorship through the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation will help fund horticulture-related programs across grades pre-K-12.

In addition to their flagship Eldredge Lumber & Hardware store in York, the company owns Atlantic Design Center in York and Eldredge Bros. Fly Shop in Cape Neddick; Eldredge Lumber & Hardware, Atlantic Design Center and Marvin Design Gallery by Eldredge in Portland; and the new Selectwood in Portsmouth, NH. All together, Eldredge employs over 350 people.

“This donation from Eldredge is an incredible next step in the relationship that we have already been building with them,” said Kathy Sargent, outgoing SRTC director. “The funds will support all horticulture-based projects in

the district, with a focus on organic gardening, which is important to both Eldredge and SRTC.”

Sargent said garden projects add so much value to the schools. “Not only do they add beauty, but they also allow students to learn about science, math, art and a multitude of skills while also having the opportunity to give back to their community.”

Eldredge said her company is looking forward to continuing the relationship. “This is not a one-time donation. We’re in it for the long run,” she said.

SRTC Landscape & Horticulture Teacher Pamela Durack said they are excited by the opportunity.

“Over the school year of 2023-24 we hope to construct a rain garden to promote the idea that run-off water is a precious resource that should be directed through soils and plants to clean it before it joins our waterways,” she said. “This is a complex project that will require engineering land shape, soils and native plants to accomplish its goal.”

The new partnership is a natural fit for a company that prides itself on selling all-natural herbicides and pesticides on its store shelves.

“Back in 2015, my father-in-law Scott was the first hardware store owner in the country, arguably the world, to take synthetic herbicides and pesticides off our shelves,” said Lindsey Eldredge. “You will not find Miracle Grow in the store, you will not find Roundup or anything like

that. Everyone said that’s a terrible idea! But we found quite the opposite — sales in that department soared!”

In this regard, the values that Eldredge Lumber embraces intersects very well with the goals of the SRTC Landscape & Horticulture program, said Durack. “We both are committed to sustainability and the preservation of the health and well being that green spaces provide.”

In the Landscape and Horticulture program at SRTC, explained Durack, a big piece of the mission is to help students understand how “Plants Solve Problems for People.” Landscapes are not merely ornamental but can fulfill multiple purposes from using hedges to manage wind and sun exposure to compost methods that manage and digest trash to planting spaces to prevent erosion. Horticulture trains students to think about all of the ways that plants are food, clothing, medicine and climate managers around the world with a specific focus on what is available to us in Maine.”

“The kids coming out of SRTC are VERY qualified. So from the business standpoint, if I can employ anyone from SRTC, they are not what we consider entry level because of the knowledge that they’ve acquired in high school. I’m looking at it like it’s an untapped employment pool for us potentially. That makes me feel great from a business perspective, that makes me feel good too.”