



News Release

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Montgomery School Hosts Saskatoon's First Hack-a-Toy Event

On Tuesday, May 9, Montgomery School students and staff will take part in Saskatoon's first Hack-a-Toy event. The event is being held in partnership between Montgomery School and Neil Squire's Makers Making Change program to teach students about assistive technology and devices, including how to make the devices using soldering irons and 3D printing. Devices made during the sessions will be donated to the Saskatchewan Health Authority's Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program.

"Neil Squire's Makers Making Change program contacted Montgomery School when they heard about the unique skill set of our students," the school's vice principal David Crowell said, explaining that Montgomery is home to the interSTELLAR program, which provides user-ready STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) kits to Saskatoon Public Schools' middle years classrooms.

More than 100 students from grades 5 to 8 will participate in various build sessions throughout the day to make electronic adaptive switches for children with movement-limiting disabilities. Adaptive switches offer easier movement solutions, like the press of a button instead of turning a knob, when operating electronic devices.

"We had similar builds earlier in the school year when we constructed DC Circuit kits as part of the interSTELLAR program," said Crowell. "When I explained this project to my students, they were genuinely excited about the chance to use their skills for another great cause."

The Neil Squire organization has been revolutionizing the lives of Canadians with disabilities since 1984 through accessible technology. Their work is focused on four distinct areas: innovation, digital literacy, employment and assistive technology. For nearly four decades, the organization has enabled people with disabilities to achieve their goals, reach their full potential and continue living life to the fullest. Makers Making Change, an initiative launched by the organization in 2016, connects volunteer makers to people with disabilities who need assistive technologies.

"There are still barriers to families who have children with disabilities," said Shannelle Waiting, western regional coordinator for Makers Making Change. "A common electronic toy that sells for \$20 can cost up to ten times that amount for children who need an adaptive device. By making these devices at low cost, with the help of volunteers, we can help level the playing field."

Media are invited to attend the opening assembly at 9:00 a.m. at Montgomery School (3230 Ortona Street) and to watch the first build session at 9:30 a.m. If you can, please arrive approximately 5-10 minutes prior to the assembly to get set up. Representatives from each partnering group will be available during the first build session to answer questions.

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