

Area resident takes up bee-keeping to help environment



By Jasen Obermeyer

Kevin Catania is raising honey bees to not only satisfy his sweet tooth, but to increase the insects' population and ensure a greener, healthier and natural environment.

Mr. Catania, 21, got his bees in early June, and has roughly 3000 honeybees split between two hives. In an interview with the Citizen, he says they cost \$200 for the bees per hive, and \$200 for each hive.

The Adjala-Tosorontio resident explained he got the bees from Innisfil Creek Honey, and heard of beekeeping from a family friend, who put him in touch with Bee Natural Caretakers. "From there, I decided this was something I wanted to do, this was something I wanted to contribute with."

According to their website, Bee Natural Caretakers is a "community group of beekeepers who are committed to supporting and participating in a natural, sustainable, organic and/or chemical-free approach." Members come from "Mulmur, Mono, Creemore, Mississauga, Orangeville, Collingwood and beyond," and are associated with the Ontario Beekeepers Association.

It is no secret Canada's honeybee population has been declining, from a combination of bad weather, pollution, chemicals and various insecticides/pesticides that kill or damage the bees, lose their queen and their hives.

In a recent article in the Toronto Star, a study found that bees exposed to neonicotinoids, "a widely-used and controversial class of pesticides," causes the bees' lifespan to be "reduced by 23 per cent" and "were less likely to identify and remove diseased larvae." Many flowers, crops, and vegetables would be gone without the bees pollinating them.

Mr. Catania says he checks the hive daily a couple times. Asked to describe his annual day as a new beekeeper, he said he makes sure they have access to a water source, they're not being overrun by other insects like ants, they're drawing out the frame and not sealing the box with the honeycomb hive, and checks their health by seeing abnormal patterns. "Just making sure that they're healthy, happy and that they're doing their thing."

He says he isn't as worried now about getting stung. "When you get to know honeybees, they're actually very friendly" for the most you can walk over and stick your hand in the hive and you'll be fine."

Despite the amount of recent rain setting the bees back, he says he's hoping to get a couple kilograms of honey, and share it with friends and family.

Mr. Catania says he's trying to make a difference and hopes to help local gardens, and have a greener summer. He suggests others can grow pollinator plants and keep a natural setting around their property, as people need to understand their importance for the environment.

"If this is something I can do to help combat these situations, then it's something I want to do. It's something lots of people can do." For more information and how to become a member of Bee Natural Caretakers, visit their website at www.beenaturalcaretakers.com.