

Every Child Plays

Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families in Ontario



Promising Practices

November 2007

Province of Ontario
Ministry of Health Promotion
gratefully acknowledged.



Promising Practices

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Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families

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Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation For Low-Income Families

Overview:

The Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families is comprised of members from a broad representation of provincial, municipal, non-profit, corporate, and advocacy partners. We all share an interest in the healthy development of children, youth, families and communities and are working collaboratively to influence policy development in Ontario to increase access to recreation for low-income children, youth and families.

Vision:

Every Child Plays

Beliefs:

In Ontario we strongly support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that speaks to the rights of children to rest and leisure. Ontario's children and youth are healthier and more resilient as a result of participating in recreational pursuits.

We believe that innovative approaches should be taken to ensure that every child regardless of financial circumstances experiences play, without barriers, engages in positive and high quality leisure pursuits and enjoys physical, social and emotional health through participation in community recreation.

Promising Practices



The Ontario Task Group on Access to Recreation for Low-Income Families would like to thank the following organizations for sharing their innovative initiatives that are increasing access to recreation for low-income children and youth:

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Canada
- Boys and Girls Club of Ontario
- Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
- Christie Lake Kids
- City of Hamilton
- City of Thunder Bay
- KidSport Ontario
- The Colletivo Cultural: Capoeira com Crianças
- St. Stephen's Community House
- Town of Ajax
- York Region, Community and Health Services Department

Promising Practices



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1) Organization: St. Stephen's Community House

- St. Stephen's Community House is a unique, community-based social service agency that has been serving the needs of Kensington Market and surrounding neighbourhoods in downtown West Toronto since 1962.

Initiative

- In 2004-05, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a grant to St. Stephen's Community House through the Communities in Action Fund to help deliver the Youth Drop-In's In Action program.
- The program was launched in January 2004 and was intended to be a pilot program but since the pilot ended, St. Christopher's House has implemented a successor program that builds on St. Stephen's House initial work.

Location that initiative occurs

- The pilot took place in 5 distinct venues: a "store front" drop-in centre, boys and girls club facilities, in school settings, in public housing facilities, and in community health centres.

Purpose of the initiative

- The initiative aimed to reach approximately 1,000 low-income children and youth in Ontario.
- Non-conventional physical activity (martial arts, skateboarding, dancing etc.) were incorporated into youth drop-in centres to attract under-represented children and youth to participate in recreation programs.

Initiative Overview

- The program focused on youth that are under-represented. The pilots were evaluated and the results were compiled in a manual that was distributed to 200 youth drop-in centres across the province throughout mail, network conferences and regional workshops.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- Approximately 690 youth participated in 51 different activities in the pilot.
- 375 youth and adults were involved in the knowledge sharing sessions.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- The initiative strived to engage under-represented youths in physical activity.
- This outcome was achieved as final reports and evaluations revealed that the hardest to reach youth reported the highest levels of satisfaction with the program and recorded the highest levels of participation.

For more information, please contact:

Bridget Sinclair

St. Stephens Community House

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2) Organization: Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario

- The Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario is a strategic partnership of community clubs committed to developing the potential of Ontario's children, youth and families by developing Ontario specific programs, enriching member clubs by providing and seeking funding, and promoting the values of the Boys and Girls Club movement.
- The Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario serves primarily children and youth in low-income neighbourhoods in 52 communities across Ontario through 30 facilities and numerous outreach sites.

Initiative

- In 2004-05, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario with a grant through the Communities in Action Fund to assist with the delivery of the Adventure Quest program.
- The program began operation in 2002 and continues to operate today.

Location that initiative occurs

- The Adventure Quest program is made available through 22 Boys and Girls Clubs across Ontario. Efforts are made to utilize school facilities subsidized through the Community Use of Schools initiative. These facilities are made available at a low or no cost to the Boys and Girls Clubs thereby allowing them to offer the Adventure Quest program in new or under-serviced neighbourhoods.

Purpose of the initiative

- The intent of the Adventure Quest program is to provide a new, barrier free community sports program that focuses on participation, skill development and fun.

Initiative Overview

- Through Adventure Quest, youth aged 6-12 register and participate in a free, ten week program through their local Boys and Girls Club where they learn the basic skills of the sports of their choice.
- Upon completion of the program, staff assist the participants in registering for existing community sport programs, at a subsidized rate of 50% the normal registration cost, thereby allowing them to continue participation amongst a broader group of peers.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- The Adventure Quest program is flourishing and roughly 29,800 youths have participated to date.
- Approximately forty children/youth and fifty older adults have also received training in HIGH FIVE, Coaching and First Aid/CPR.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- The desired outcome of the program is to allow youths to expand their knowledge of a wide variety of sports and activities. The program provides low-income youth with the skills, teamwork and confidence required to meet and exceed their own personal athletic goals. These outcomes have been achieved.

For more information, please contact:

Pam Blanchfield, Director
Boys & Girls Club of Ontario
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3) Organization: Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)

- CPRA is a national voluntary-sector organization dedicated to realizing the full potential of parks and recreation services as a major contributor to community health and vibrancy. Members of CPRA include parks and recreation professionals represented in over 2,600 communities in Canada.
- CPRA works closely with 13 provincial and territorial parks and recreation associations and collaborates with a host of other national organizations operating in the recreation, physical activity, environmental, facilities, sports, public health, crime prevention and social services arenas.

Initiative

- In 2005-06, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a grant to CPRA through the Communities in Action Fund to help deliver the Everybody Gets to Play program.
- The Everybody Gets to Play program has been in operation since 2000 and continues to operate today. Additional components are added each year such as a nutritional supplement and Aboriginal component.

Location that initiative occurs

- Through the Ministry of Health Promotion grant, The Everybody Gets to Play Workshops were delivered in 5 communities across Ontario (Toronto, Ottawa, North Bay, Thunder Bay, and London).

Purpose of the initiative

- Everybody Gets to Play is a national initiative to enhance the quality of life for low-income families and their children by removing barriers to participation in sport and recreation (e.g. user fees, transportation issues, a lack of family support and barriers related to language and culture).

Initiative Overview

- The Everybody Gets to Play initiative is designed to help recreation practitioners and volunteers, who operate programs to assist low-income children and youth, mobilize the resources already available in their community.

- This initiative provides:
 - Research and facts about poverty in Canada, the health and social consequences of poverty, and how recreation can improve the lives of kids, families and communities;
 - Resources to help practitioners build partnerships in their community and plan effective action;
 - Workshops that help practitioners build skills, raise awareness and mobilize your community; and
 - Success stories about programs that have already made a difference.

CPRA also provided Everybody Gets to Play Tool Kits to Ministry staff/regional consultants to assist their efforts in supporting communities to mobilize to remove barriers to recreation for low-income children and youth (following delivery of Everybody Gets to Play Workshops).

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- Over 2,500 practitioners, working with low-income children and youth have been involved in this initiative across the province of Ontario since the inception of the program in 2000.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- Research shows that children in low-income families are far less involved in recreational pursuits than their peers in families with average and above average incomes. Everybody Gets to Play identifies the barriers in order to increase participation.

For more information, please contact:

Tanara Pickard, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
Acting Director, National Initiatives & Alliances
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4) Organization: City of Thunder Bay

Initiative

- In 2003-04, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a grant to the City of Thunder Bay Recreation & Culture Division through the Community Sport Opportunity Fund to help deliver the PRO Kids program.
- The PRO Kids program has been in operation since 1998 and continues to operate today.
- A service of the City of Thunder Bay Recreation & Culture Division, PRO Kids matches youth and children in need with community-based recreational activities.

Location that initiative occurs

- The initiative occurs in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Purpose of the initiative

- PRO KIDS sought Community Sport Opportunity funding in order to accomplish the following objectives:
 - To increase the profile of PRO Kids in the community and specifically with children and youth who cannot afford to participate in programs; and
 - To develop and implement an overall sustainability plan which would include the commencement of a fundraising committee, planning and implementing of a plan to engage business, corporate donations and individual sponsorships.

Initiative Overview

- Organizations donate registration spaces from their programs to PRO Kids.
- When registration requests exceed the total number of spaces donated, PRO Kids uses fundraising dollars to cover the cost of the additional registration fees.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- Each year since its inception in 1998, over 1,200 children and youth have been placed in recreation programs in the City of Thunder Bay through the PRO Kids program.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- The project's desired outcome to help address barriers to participation for low-income children and youth such as registration fees, transportation and equipment costs are being achieved as over 1,200 low-income children and youth have had the opportunity to participate in recreation programs.

For more information, please contact:

Sheelagh Hendrick

City of Thunder Bay, Recreation and Culture Division

Phone: (807) 625-2949

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5) Organization: The Colletivo Cultural: Capoeira com Crianças
(Cultural Collective: Capoeira with Children)

Initiative

- Capoeira com Crianças “Jogando com a Liberdade” (Cultural Collective: Capoeira with Children “Playing with Freedom”) started operating in January 2007 and is currently expanding programming.
- The program is 100% FREE for children and their parents.
- The Province of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Heritage is a generous supporter of the initiative.

Location that initiative occurs

- Scadding Court Community Centre, 707 Dundas Street West (South-east corner of Dundas and Bathurst).
- Ryerson Community School (96 Denison Ave. South-west corner of Denison and Dundas street west).

Purpose of the Initiative

- To offer opportunities to children and youth and (in some cases their parents) to develop leadership skills, with a focus on exploration of cultural identity.
- To increase neighbourhood children and youth's historical knowledge around slavery, racism and African-Canadian activism in Toronto.

Initiative Overview

- Capoeira training sessions (song, dance and martial arts movements) integrate activities (drumming, stories, workshops) that explore the history of slavery with an emphasis on Canada and Brazil.
- Children perform as group for Ryerson Community School and additional community sites (performance as popular education) - Capoeira, drumming, oral presentations and storytelling.
- Participants develop, organize and implement interactive performances that highlight Toronto heritage (and other) sites that are relevant to the history of slavery.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- Currently 30+ children and youth (ages 5-12 years) and parents are involved and additional participation is occurring.
- Minimum 500+ neighborhood community members are interactive participants for performances as popular education.

Desired Outcomes of the Initiative

- Using the knowledge gained through their participation in program development and implementation, children work with the facilitator to identify and learn about African, Brazilian, Caribbean and Canadian people and places relevant to the history of slavery.
- The program fosters peaceful conflict resolution, peace building, leadership, trust development, emotional awareness, creativity and non-verbal and verbal communication skills.
- Children and youth are physically active, sing in Brazilian Portuguese, develop language skills and play Afro-Brazilian and Pan-African musical instruments (Berimbau-single-stringed acoustic instrument a, various sizes of drums, Pandeiro-tambourine, agogo, reco reco etc.).
- Participants explore visual arts, improvisation, dance, gymnastics, self-defense, cultural identity, children's rights, community building and decision making.
- Opportunities are provided to perform for community, mentor other children and youth and develop skills to cope with emotions with respect for self and others.
- Participants are able to grasp and articulate the historical impacts of slavery.

Children, youth and parents have shared the following feedback:

- " I love Capoeira." (Mario, age 10 years, during first Capoeira class of Fall 2007)
- " The kids love the program so much, please bring it back for next year." (Kelly, mom of Gabriel, age 10 years, who has been a member and performer since Spring 2007)
- " The kids have been emailing me about how great their summer has been performing Capoeira all over Toronto, in Kensington Market for Pedestrian Sundays, for the Chinatown Festival and at Central Technical High School for their Multi-Cultural Festival. My former grade 3 students and Capoeira

- kids Tara, Jesse and Katie are so excited for Capoeira in the Fall of 2007 at Ryerson School.” (Lead Grade 3 teacher at Ryerson Community School for Capoeira in the classroom Spring 2007)
- “Let’s organize a girls only Capoeira class so that me, my daughters and the other young Muslim girls at the school will have a space to practice.” (Tara, mom of Abdur, Sakinna and Sabika, ages 9, 10 and 4)

For more information, please contact:

Hilary “Lagartixa” Gold

Project Co-ordinator and Capoeira Co-Instructor

Coletivo Cultural: Capoeira com Crianças “Jogando com a Liberdade”
(Cultural Collective: Capoeira with Children “Playing with Freedom)

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In partnership with:

Scadding Court Community Centre, 707 Dundas Street West (South-east corner of Dundas and Bathurst)

Ryerson Community School (96 Denison Ave. South-West corner of Denison and Dundas Street West)

Grupo União na Capoeira Canada, 276 Augusta Ave. (East West HapKiDo Academy)

6) Organization: KidSport Ontario

- KidSport believes that sport should be accessible to all, and that no child should be denied the benefits of participating in sport.
- KidSport helps disadvantaged youths overcome social and economic barriers preventing or limiting their participation in organized sport, through the issuance of registration fee and/or equipment grants.

Initiative

- In 2005-06, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a grant to KidSport through the Communities in Action Fund to help deliver the KidSport Fun Zone project.
- The KidSport Fun Zone project has been in operation since 2000 and continues to operate today.

Location that initiative occurs

- The KidSport Fun Zone project in 2005-2006 operated in 17 communities across Ontario.

Purpose of the initiative

- One of KidSport Ontario's main objectives is the establishment of grassroots chapters throughout the province. The KidSport Fun Zone project enables local community leaders to take the KidSport model, and adapt it to meet their specific community needs.

Initiative Overview

- The KidSport Fun Zone is an interactive sport event, where kids of all ages have the chance to test their skill at a wide variety of sports. The 17 communities involved with this particular CIAF grant were assisted with raising funds to help local kids participate in local organized sport.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- The target to implement an additional 20 Fun Zones in 2005-2006 was exceeded as 29 Fun Zones were implemented.
- 200-250 kids participated in each Fun Zone for a total of approximately 5800 – 7250 children and youth who were involved in the program.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- The KidSport Fun Zone project helps local communities raise funds to help reduce financial barriers to participation for low-income youth.

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Lyle Abbott

KidSport Ontario

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7) Organization: Town of Ajax

Initiative

- The Summer Playground program was implemented in the early 1970's and is still in operation today.
- As the Town of Ajax grows, the Playground program continues to expand in order to cover all geographical locations.
- The program is universal and is offered free of charge to all who attend.

Location that initiative occurs

- The program began with six locations and has grown to 20 sites to date.
- These programs operate out of 20 different neighborhood parks.

Purpose of the initiative

- The program provides leadership opportunities for children and encourages friendship, physical activity and creativity in a safe and positive environment, while developing skills and attitudes that will allow them to grow as individuals.

The following are recognized basic needs of children and young people in our program:

- The need for fun, self-expression, the joy of doing and the satisfaction of accomplishment;
- The need for a role model whom they can trust and to whom they may turn to for help in the difficult process of growing up;
- The need for association with each other and the opportunity to talk about their worries, to understand about living and about each other; in other words enriching personal and group experiences;
- The need to feel valued and wanted and to be considered responsible, useful and important - the need for identification within their community;
- The need for skills and know-how which gives self-confidence and social poise;
- The need for understanding relationships, which gives security in family life and help in giving group status;
- The need for help in setting goals for the future and how to go about achieving their goals.

Initiative Overview

- The Playground is designed as a drop-in for children ages 6-12 yrs. old. At each park, staff will implement various activities, sports and games throughout the day.
- The Playground program is an informal program which operates on a “come and go as you please” basis. Children are permitted to leave the park at any time.
- Parents are welcome to attend the program with their children.
- There is also a Pint Size program component for children ages 3-5years of age that operates everyday from 10:00-11:00am though parents must attend this program with their child(ren).
- Playgrounds run for 8 weeks of the summer and operate Monday to Thursday 9:00am - 12 noon and 1:00-4:00pm and Friday 9:00am - 12 noon
- There is no lunchtime supervision and staff leave site during this time.
- Summer Playgrounds is an outdoor program and is cancelled in the event of rain/thunderstorms and may close during times of extreme heat.
- On occasion we have off site trips (swimming/skating/special event). Each site is allowed to bring a maximum of 20 participants on the trips. A permission form must be signed by the parent/guardian and there is a nominal fee required.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- On average, the Playground has over 24,000 visits each summer. Some children attend all summer while others attend at various times throughout the summer.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

Our Playground sites are a place to:

- Allow every age a fair chance, with girls and boys given equal consideration;
- Develop a variety of skills at various degrees of ability in many varied activities;
- Meet new friends in a safe, wholesome environment, emphasizing fair play;
- Acquire skills as a child which will enrich their leisure time throughout their life;

- Develop social skills and healthy relationships with other children in the program;
- Provide an enriching and memorable summer experience for children and families of the Town of Ajax, free of charge.
- Customer feedback forms are provided to parents and children throughout the summer. On average over 100 feedback forms are received each summer.

The following are a few quotes from the summer of 2007:

- “This summer program has been amazing. My 3 children attend regularly & always had a great time. The leaders were wonderful. I truly hope this will be an ongoing program offered yearly. It is needed for the children.”
- “I am very pleased with the program. It’s great for the kids in the neighborhood to get to know each other and socialize in a safe setting.”
- “This program is great for my kids because I can see that they are having fun with the leaders and their friends. It is also good that they are getting outside of the house and having a good time being active.”
- “The staff did a fantastic job. They were just as enthusiastic at the beginning as they were at the end. My children thoroughly enjoyed the program. Can’t believe it is free!”

The Town of Ajax values the Playground program as it meets the needs of a growing and diverse community. Town Council has supported the program since it’s inception. The Playground program offers all children a free, fun and safe environment to play, learn and grow - as we operate under the Parks and Recreation Ontario, HIGH FIVE Principles of Healthy Child Development.

For more information, please contact:

Andrew Norris, Community Recreation Co-ordinator
Town of Ajax
Phone: (905) 619-2529 ext. 7248
Email: andrew.norris@townofajax.com

8) Organization: Christie Lake Kids

Initiative

- The Skills Through Activities and Recreation (STAR) Program is a year-round, community-based after-school and weekend skill-development program aimed at low-income children and youth ages 6-17.

Location that initiative occurs

- The STAR program is hosted in close proximity to various social housing communities in Ottawa in already-existing community buildings such as schools and community centres.
- This model of service delivery enables us to deliver cost effective programs by avoiding large overhead costs that we would incur if we owned the facility.
- It ensures that the sites are accessible to our participants, as transportation is all too often a barrier for the economically disadvantaged.

Purpose of the initiative

- The goal of the STAR Program is to use skill-development programs in sports, recreation, and the arts to target the risk factors associated with poverty and improve the short and long term prospects for poor children.

Short Term Goals

- To increase participation in the sports and arts for low income children and youth
- To improve physical and emotional health
- To increase social skills and ability to make long-lasting friendships
- To provide positive, reliable, adult role models
- To decrease the amount of unstructured free-time youth in the community have, resulting in decreased boredom, increased supervision, and decreased involvement in antisocial behaviour
- To identify any additional barriers faced by families (such as cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, etc.) that impede their participation and overcome them
- To continue to develop partnerships to better serve the community's children
- To continue ongoing evaluation and improvement of our programs to assure their effectiveness and efficiency

Long Term Goals

- To improve self-esteem and self-efficacy
- To increase employability and overall contribution to society
- To improve overall life quality
- To reduce social isolation
- To reduce antisocial and criminal behaviour in our participants in adolescence and adulthood
- To reduce reliance on social services

Initiative Overview

- Programs are offered to participants at no cost and transportation and equipment are provided.
- STAR offers programs in sports (such as swimming, martial arts, basketball, etc), the arts, education (such as computers and tutoring), and life skills (such as leadership and cooking).
- These programs are each offered weekly for junior and senior groups in four 8-12 week terms throughout the year.
- Each week participants work on clearly defined skill-steps, taught by dedicated volunteers, in order to achieve badges and certificates in the multi-leveled programs in which they participate.
- We also host several special events, including a holiday party, overnight camps, and awards ceremonies.

Essential Elements of Program

- We eliminate the barrier of cost. All of our programs are offered at no cost to the families and all necessary equipment is provided.
- We eliminate the barrier of transportation by offering programs right within the communities our participants come from, or, when the community does not have a facility we need (such as a pool or ice rink), we transport children to programs in the Christie Lake Kids' van or provide bus tickets to their families to get them to programs.
- We take a community approach, getting all kids involved and working in partnership with community service providers to increase our success in serving the residents.
- Our emphasis is on skill-development and we track all participants progress over the years.

- No previous skills are required. We do not have tryouts. Everyone with parental permission is welcome. This is important because many economically disadvantaged children have not had access to recreational opportunities in order to develop skills to the same level as their middle class counterparts.
- We ensure a high volunteer to participant ratio in order to create an environment where our participants can get the attention and teaching they need, allowing us to work with children who exhibit more demanding behaviours.
- We are largely volunteer run which ensures our programs are cost-effective
- We actively pursue participants. On an ongoing basis, Christie Lake staff are in contact with participants and their families encouraging participation and making efforts to resolve any reluctance on the part of participants. In this way, we are continually adapting our programs and policies to suit the needs of disadvantaged populations.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- In 2007, the STAR program served nearly 400 children and youth in six communities in Ottawa.
- The majority of participants, 84.6%, were involved in numerous programs and continue to participate from year-to-year.
- By the end of 2007, STAR will have hosted more than 2,000 hours of programming.
- The success of our programs is directly attributed to the more than 100 volunteers who contribute more than 13,000 hours of their time and expertise.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- STAR improves the quality of life for its participants and has a significant impact on the community. Physical activity improves children's physical development, while gaining skills in the arts and sports improves their positive emotional development, self-esteem, and social skills (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2007; Canadian Parks and Recreation, 2007).
- Yet, despite being at a far greater risk of poor physical and emotional development than their middle class counterparts, economically disadvantaged children, without programs like STAR, have far less access to recreation.

- An independent evaluation of the STAR program (Bania, 2005) revealed that “the program...had noticeable effects on participants’ self-esteem, behaviours at home and at school, family dynamics, academic performance, and so on,” according to STAR participants, their parents, STAR staff and volunteers, and other community partners.
- This evaluation also revealed a belief by community stakeholders that STAR helps battle feelings of social isolation and promote tolerance and cross-cultural understanding among residents, as well as raise public awareness of the issues and barriers experienced by community residents (Bania, 2005).
- Bania (2005) also found decreased police calls since the intervention and much success in attracting and retaining children with special needs, such as those who have repeated a grade in school, attended special education classes, and/or demonstrated behavioural problems.
- The intervention community and its surrounding neighbourhoods experienced a 10.5% drop in average monthly number of police calls for service during the implementation of the STAR program compared to prior to our intervention (Bania, 2005). All City of Ottawa communities used for comparison experienced an increase in calls during this time, with the increase in some communities being as large as 60.6%.

For more information, please contact:

Janice Barresi

Christie Lake Kids

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9) Organization: York Region, Community and Health Services Department

Working together to sustain and enhance the well being of individuals and families today, for stronger communities tomorrow.

- The total population of York Region is 892,712
- Nine lower tier municipalities deliver local services such as Parks and Recreation
- A 2nd tier regional level of government delivers coordinated services in all nine municipalities:
 - Family and Children's Services
 - Housing Services
 - Employment and Financial Assistance

Initiative

- Family Strengthening Programs are a range of programs delivered to eligible families at no cost. They provide opportunities for parents and children to engage in the community. Families select the programs according to their need and interest.
- Family Strengthening programs are funded by York Region Community and Health Services Department and delivered by local municipal recreation departments and community agencies.
- The programs are detailed below.

Summer Day Camp

Established in 1999, this program provides children with access to summer recreational programs offered by local municipal recreation departments.

2006 Participants: 502

Eligibility Criteria:

- Children of Ontario Works participants
- Children of Social Housing residents

After School Programs in Social Housing Communities

Since 2003 providing a safe and positive after school environment which promotes positive social, emotional and physical development to children residing in 5 Social Housing sites in York Region.

2006 Participants: 412

Eligibility Criteria:

- Children 6-12 years of age residing in Social Housing sites

Youth Leadership Camp

Beginning in 2000, this program provides youth with an opportunity to attend residential camps (Camp Rainbow or Hidden bay Leadership Camp), for one week during the summer.

2006 Participants: 80

Eligibility Criteria:

- Youth 13 to 16 years age residing in a Social Housing community and/or receiving Social Assistance
- Must have parental consent

Swim to Survive Initiative

York Region in partnership with the nine local municipal recreation departments, local school boards and the Lifesaving Society launched the “Swim to Survive” program in 2005. The program is offered at schools in York Region, identified by School Boards as having a higher percentage of students with families new to Canada and/or families with limited financial resources. This initiative began in 2005 in response to an increase in the number of child drownings.

“Swim to Survive” teaches children in Grade 3 about the inherent risks associated with water, provides them with the skills necessary to survive an unexpected fall into water and provides parents with important water education information.

2006 Participants: 3,330

Positive Leisure Activities for Youth Program (PLAY)

Since spring 2004, subsidies have been available for children and youth to attend recreation and sport programs such as swimming, dance lessons or sport programs (one program per session) in spring, fall and winter. Programs available are the same as those offered to the general public.

2006 Participants: 923

Eligibility Criteria:

- Children age 4 to 12 years (4-18 years as of fall 2007)
- Children of Ontario Works Participants
- Children of parents in receipt of Child Care Fee Assistance
- Children of parents residing in Social Housing

Parent Feedback . . .

“I felt that my family was average and did not feel needy”

-Social Assistance recipient

“Thank you, Thank you! Finally I didn’t have to say no”

-Parent of a PLAY participant

“It was difficult after work to run and pick up the children, rush to the community centre and finally arrive home at 8pm for dinner, bath, homework and bed. . .was it worth it? YES!!

-Sole support parent receiving Child Care Fee Assistance

“It gives you the energy (seeing your child) to go out into the workforce and help others”

-Social Assistance recipient

“Being new to Canada, it helped me learn English”

- Parent of a PLAY participant

Child Feedback . . .

“I made a lot of friends”
“I like going (with my friend from school)”
“I like my teacher”
“I can swim now”
“I’m not afraid of the water”
“I can’t wait till next time”

For more information, please contact:

Bernice Landry, Project Coordinator, Community Initiatives
Family and Children’s Services Branch
Community and Health Services Department
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Email: Bernice.Landry@york.ca

10) Organization: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC)

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) serves children and youth by providing mentoring programs across Canada. BBBSC offers support to more than 1000 Canadian communities with over 150 local agencies that offer the one-to-one matching service upon which the organization was founded.
- Men and women (age 18 or older) give of their time to become a mentor to a young person who can greatly benefit from having a positive adult role model.

Initiative

- In 2007-08, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a grant to BBBSC through the Communities in Action Fund to help deliver the Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds program.
- The program began in September 2007 and is intended to continue on a permanent basis.

Location that initiative occurs

- 15 Big Brother Big Sister agencies have been identified to deliver the Go Girls! program in collaboration with 25 schools across the province.

Purpose of the initiative

- The program is designed to provide girls aged 12-14 with information to help them make informed choices about healthy, active living and support them in dealing with the emotional, social, and cultural issues they may face.

Initiative Overview

- Go Girls! is a mentor-lead, seven session program that incorporates fun, educational games and activities designed to stimulate self-reflection and group discussion. Each session addresses the topics of active living, balanced eating, and feeling good. Participants and mentors also complete a personal journal at the end of each session.

- Key issues for girls participating in the program include:
 - Body Image ;
 - Self-Esteem ;
 - Healthy Eating ;
 - Physical Activity ;and
 - Relationships.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- The program is expected to reach approximately 828 low-income children in Ontario.

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- The program's desired outcome is to provide girls with the tools they need to implement healthier and happier lifestyle.

For more information, please contact:

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11) Organization: City of Hamilton and Sport Hamilton**Initiative**

- In July 2007, the Ministry of Health Promotion provided a \$30,000 grant to the City of Hamilton and Sport Hamilton through the Communities in Action Fund to help deliver the cultural and linguistic Community Roundtable project.

Location that initiative occurs

- The programs are held in City of Hamilton recreation centres (the City of Hamilton provides free space) or on City of Hamilton fields that are also free or subsidized.

Purpose of the initiative

- The City of Hamilton and Sport Hamilton are working in partnership to help active community members interested in starting pilot recreation programs cut through the red tape for access to recreation facilities, logistical support, administrative aid and funding.
- This Community Roundtable project also serves as a direct line of communication between the community and the City of Hamilton to better identify and address local cultural and linguistic recreational needs.

Initiative Overview

- The project officially started September 11, 2006 by pulling together active local cultural and linguistic community groups and members for participation on the roundtable with a goal to launch in November 2006.
- Three target groups were identified for project inclusion: children and youth, people with disabilities and visible/ethnic/linguistic minorities.
- In December 2006 a change in overall strategy from group roundtable discussions to individual consultation sessions between the City representative and each community/group leader was made in order to accommodate participant schedules and address unique challenges relating to each representative group.

- There are already a few programs that are complete such as inner-city youth soccer (14-18 year olds) that provides equipment, field time and association fees for low-income youth that would otherwise not be able to play and a St. Joseph's Women's Centre children's summer camp program (6-10 year olds) which was recently extended for January 2008.

Numbers of people accessing the program/initiative

- Currently 8 community groups have completed or started pilot projects with an additional 6 in the approval phase (the project will allow for an additional 2-3 community groups to be added in early 2008 once phase 1 funding has been complete), on track for obtaining projected community group participation levels (15).

Desired outcomes of the initiative

- Through the first two of three phases for the project (Step 1 - Organization; Step 2 - Implementation; Step 3 - Measurement) currently underway, the biggest identified success thus far has been community interest and participation combined with actual program development / implementation progress.
- In the 13 months since project inception almost all participant group slots have been filled (14 with a possible 2-3 additional groups to be added in 2008, funds permitting).
- Eight groups have progressed to the implementation phase (the other 6 to commence no later than January 2008) and almost all of the awarded CIAF grant money has been allocated directly to local youth and cultural community groups for proposed recreation programming.
- Direct interaction with community groups related to the project has opened a channel of communication between the city and isolated groups, giving voice to recreation related barriers and opportunities.
- Through the partnership with Sport Hamilton and participation of SISO (Settlement and Integration Services Organization) barriers outlined in various recreation reports have also started to be addressed, benefiting more general cross-sections of the community (i.e. subsidy procedure).

- The project coordination team (City of Hamilton and Sport Hamilton representatives/project coordinators) have also gained valuable experience and feedback from the community that can be leveraged, to better address community recreation programming needs in the present and future.

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