

Curling Championship A Team Effort

By Jane Barry of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

The sport of curling has a long history in Saint John and is one which attracts enthusiastic fans from across Canada. Less known is the volunteer side of hosting a national bonspiel and the planning and myriad of details necessary to attract an event of this scope and ensure guests from all provinces of the country have a great experience and leave impressed with our community.

The recent 2010 Canadian Masters Curling Championship left participants with a very positive impression of Greater Saint John and New Brunswick, thanks to over fifty volunteers who made it a huge success. The key to the bonspiel's success was teamwork and organization. It took experience and months of pre-planning. Valerie Laing, the event Chairperson, and Co-Chair Sandra Franey, have all of those qualities and drew on a large group of volunteers who know the sport and how to make out-of-town guests welcome. Laing will soon take over as President of Thistle Saint Andrews Curling Club (TSA) in Saint John's North End and curls three or four times a week. It all began over a year ago when Thistle Saint Andrews made their bid for the event, competing against other provinces. It had never been held in New Brunswick before, so it was an opportunity to show off maritime hospitality to the twenty-five men's and women's teams. With eight ice sheets, it can host large competitions.

The bonspiel committees numbered over 15, involving transportation, finance, sponsors, accommodation, media relations, opening & closing ceremonies and officials to name a few. Bill Ayles, President of the 350-member TSA stated "the organizing committee worked hard to put on a top notch event...to get the club ready ...and during the event". In all, over fifty volunteers gave their time to the six-day bonspiel. Committee members included: Donna Hawco, Russell Miller, Terry Robart, Ian Patrick, Fran Meehan, Veniene and Bernie Regenbogen, Doreen Tait, Larry Crawford, Dave Garnett, Jean Banham, Sue Collins, Bill Ayles, Wayne Cooper, Mary Astorino, Dale Parkhill, Ben Smith and Karen Holyoke.

"Curling is one of the few sports that can be played by people in their retirement years." says Ray Lloyd, an active community volunteer and curler. Participants in Masters events must be over sixty. He marvels at the number of enthusiasts who play often into their eighties, benefitting greatly from not only the physical activity but the social benefits of being involved in organized sports. It's also a sport for the younger set or "little rocks" as they're known. TSA is home to school-age curlers (under 12) and junior (age 12-21) events for about six months of the year. TSA makes ice time available for youth and hosts many charity fundraisers. In addition to TSA, Carleton Curling Club on the West Side, Hampton and Riverside all are active Saint John area clubs. They, along with Bathurst and Miramichi, were key in providing officiating at the recent Masters Bonspiel.

The New Brunswick men's rink of Rod Aube, Jake Healey, Gord Tuttle and Bob Brannen hailed from the Capital Winter Club in Fredericton and TSA's own rink of Ellen Brennan, Nancy Porter, Rose Donovan and Kathy Grass represented the women, finishing third. Final bonspiel results may be found at www.eteamz.com/CanadianMasters .

Bringing conferences, sporting events and meetings to our community benefits a wide range of local businesses and our economy. Research shows that participants usually combine a personal component to their travels, extending their stay and may come back with family or friends for return visits. Local volunteers are a big factor in making such gatherings happen. As Volunteer Week closes we owe them a collective thank you.

Info: www.tsacurlingclub.com Paula Ross, 506-634-7656 49 Dufferin Ave.



Photo: Countless volunteer hours go into planning for a national sporting event like the 2010 Canadian Masters Curling Championship, recently hosted by Thistle Saint Andrews Curling Club for the first time in New Brunswick. Pictured are some of the numerous volunteers led by Valerie Laing (front right) and Co-Chair Sandra Franey (absent from photo) who made it a Saint John success.



Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880.

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