

Summer Camps Abound in Our Community

By Jane Barry, The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

As warmer weather prompts us to plan summer activities, it is reassuring to know our community has a wealth of summer activities, camps and experiences waiting for our children and youth, regardless of their financial means. It takes hundreds of volunteers, raising countless dollars to make it possible but there is no doubt we are showing what a caring community we are. Some professionals in the field believe there are more than enough to go around and coordination, with sustained support for those in place is what is most needed to stretch resources.

Shilo Boucher, Acting CEO of the YM-YWCA states " we have 7 camping locations running all summer long. The Y is open to all and encourages all children to participate no matter their financial situation. I would really like to see more children have the opportunity to attend our day camps at the Glenn Carpenter Centre, it is a gem right in the middle of our city. We also have camps at Prince Charles School, Millidgeville Community Centre, Forest Glen Community Centre, West-Church of Good Shepherd, and the q-plex." The Y also operates the residential Camp Glenburn on Belleisle Bay, a camp for children with disabilities and is offering a Girls Basketball Camp at St. Malachy's High. Their Strong Kids Campership Program makes it possible for anybody to attend regardless of financial ability.

The Saint John Boys and Girls Club's Debbie Cooper is a strong believer in avoiding duplication so they take advantage of many existing programs for the hundreds of children who use their facilities. In partnership with groups already organizing summer camps, like the Imperial Theatre, Hammond River Angling Association, Saint John Arts Centre, Interaction Children's Theatre, Lily Lake Pavilion, Ball Hockey, minor sports and Tim Hortons, Boys and Girls Club youth can attend summer day and residential programs. This is very important to families whose children might otherwise not be able to afford the cost.

For 39 years Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) has been supporting children in our community. It enriches the lives of both the volunteer and the children, who due to family, social, economic or personal circumstances, need the friendship of an adult in a safe and happy environment. They have a wealth of summer camps and programs for the many children they serve. The Saint John Police Force has partnered with (BB/BS) to offer Kids "N" Kops, a mini police academy which provides an opportunity to have fun and learn about law enforcement. Fun While You Wait is designed to provide services for children on their waiting list and includes swimming, craft days, treasure hunts, trivia, games and sports. Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds for girls 11-13 promotes and educates participants about healthy eating and physical activity, building self-esteem. Game On! (Eat Smart, Play Smart, Live Smart) helps boys 11-13 in a small group setting with a trusted mentor.

The TRC or Saint John Centre for Youth, its official name, is a haven and beehive of activities, programs and services year round but makes special efforts to offer 25-50 teens meaningful and fun summer activities and outings each weekday afternoon. They often do not have the financial means to cover even the cost of transportation to its Richmond Street location so Director June Breau Nason is hoping to find support from the community to cover those costs as well as to cover all the many outdoors activities and excursions they organize over the summer months. She explains there are not so many opportunities for teens, especially when all costs are covered.

For those keeping an eye on their budgets, the City of Saint John's Leisure Services offer recreational programs across the city as do outlying communities. They put an emphasis on priority neighbourhoods such as Crescent Valley, the North End, the Village Neighbourhood and Lower West Side. Minor sports groups, the Aquatic Centre and New Brunswick Museum run summer programs too, as well as several churches with residential programs like Camp Medley and Circle Square. PRO (positive recreational opportunities) Kids is a charitable group operating in Greater Saint John with the support of local municipalities, whose goal is to reach over 1,000 kids this year, helping families with limited financial means to send their children to the music, theatre, sports and recreational programs of their dreams.

David Thomas, General Manager of DayTripping speaks for the programs based from the Lily Lake Pavilion. "This summer is going to be the third year of Camp Awesome. This year 250 children are being sponsored to come to Camp Awesome through Pro-Kids and the Pond Hockey Tournament. They participate in kayaking, rock climbing, geo-caching and camp games. These are children who would not otherwise have a chance to come to camp ...we work with other external agencies, including the Saint John Multicultural Society.

ONE (Old North End) is again offering summer programs for teens. Gina Reid states " Thanks to many great volunteers, partnerships and sponsors such as the Greater Saint John Community Foundation and the Community Arts Board, the ONE Change was able to run another successful teen summer program in 2010 in the Old North End. We had 50 youth registered ... who volunteered approximate 3000 hours in various ways to their community. It was amazing to see the pride and motivation they had when completing the jobs and training that they themselves identified as important."

The Saint John Arts Centre offers SPaRT camps for children 8-12 years S.P.A.R.T. (Sport, Participaction, Art, Recreation, Together) from July 18-22 and August 15-19. The cost is \$175/week, early bird \$160 with the possibility of sponsorship if there is financial need.

For young people between 7 and 12 with an interest in the Environment or who want to learn about bugs, fish and other wetland animals, learn to kayak, fish, fly fish and snorkel there is the Kids-R-Cool 4 Conservation Summer Camp put on by the Hammond River Angling Association. Weekly camps over the summer include scientific education, fishing, swimming, kayaking, and games. Campers can progress through various levels of expertise as they participate and learn.



Photo: Dozens of camps and programs will abound for our community youth this coming summer. Young people form a circle at the Y's Camp Glenburn, one of the residential options for campers. *(Photo by J. Barry for the Telegraph Journal)*



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 506-672-8800, sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com . To view other Community Profiles go to www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca