

- 19 -

## Erickson

### Volunteer Facilitators Fan Out to Promote Healthy Living

The town of Erickson may be a small community, but it has big ambitions when it comes to promoting active living initiatives. The local CDPI committee includes the nearby towns of Sandy Lake and Onanole, and has trained ten volunteer facilitators to run specific programs. “We are targeting everyone in the community,” said CDPI chairperson Tara Elliott. “There isn’t an age that doesn’t need to get a little more exercise.”

Community response to the programs has been outstanding, with open gym nights drawing between 30 to 40 people ranging from age four right up to senior citizens. People of all ages are also the focus of the area’s “Let’s Try It” campaign, which features clinics and workshops that allow individuals to try new physical activities. Free skate nights, baseball events, cross-country skiing, and volleyball nights have been offered, while volunteer facilitators have organized

*“None of them had ever skated before, so we lent them skates and they loved it so much their faces just lit up.”*

running and walking groups. Other community members have run exercise boot camp, taught yoga, and even given karate classes. Skating nights have been particularly successful, and skating events in Onanole with pizza and a movie night afterwards proved to be highly popular.

The CDPI committee is divided into two distinct groups – healthy eating and active living – and both brainstorm to come up with creative ways to put on new events. One cooking class in nearby Sandy Lake, for example, focused on barbecuing healthy food, with an Erickson facilitator running the event and talking about healthy eating while the barbecue took place. Another cooking workshop targeted young moms, including handy tips like sneaking vegetables into grilled cheese sandwiches in order to get discerning kids eating their veggies with a smile. “We’ve had a lot of successes with both sides of our program,” said Elliott. “Being a small community, everyone pulls together.”

Community partners in Erickson include the local Legion, where winter walking groups are held, and the library, which is used for meetings and workshops. The town’s fitness centre has also supported the “Let’s Try It” initiative by offering the free use of its facilities to participants for clinics and exercise sessions. The Town Council is also on board with the CDPI and has responded enthusiastically to various presentations and programs.

Family involvement has been crucial to the success of exercise events in the area,

with entire families coming out for soccer games, gym nights, road hockey, and free skate night. One family of five moved to Erickson from the Philippines and really took to ice skating. They were having difficulty getting used to the cold winters and finding activities for the family and decided to give the Canadian tradition a try. “None of them had ever skated before, so we lent them skates and they loved it so much their faces just lit up,” Elliott said.

“They all went and bought skates, and the next time we had a free skate they were all there.”

**Contact Information:**

Tara Elliott  
204-636-2717  
tarastev@mts.net

Take Note

**Healthy Barbecue Tips**

Grilling is a heart-healthy way to cook if done right:

- Choose foods that are lower in fat such as chicken breasts, fish, and lean cuts of meat. Trim all excess fat prior to cooking.
- Marinate your foods using an olive oil and lemon dressing. This will not only give flavour and tenderize your meats, but will also help to make barbecuing healthier because the dressing can keep your foods from charring.
- Charred foods are the greatest sources of unhealthy chemicals, so cook your foods on medium.
- If you do happen to burn your steak or potatoes, remove the charred parts.
- Try wrapping your foods in aluminum foil to keep them from burning.

[http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.4149377/k.865B/Barbecue\\_cues.htm](http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.4149377/k.865B/Barbecue_cues.htm)

- 20 -

## Erickson

### Active Living Championed

The CDPI committee in the Erickson area covers three rural municipalities, and its Active Living programs have been spreading like a prairie wildfire! A big reason for the exponential growth has

been the Activate the Champions Campaign, which is also supported by Manitoba *in motion*. The campaign was co-coordinated by the area's Active Living facilitator, Russell Thorne, who trained ten area volunteers to implement various fitness initiatives. "It was as though I had extra hands in the communities," Thorne said.

The Active Living Champion volunteers were shown how to start walking programs and work with individuals using the Canadian physical activity guide. "Anywhere, Anytime" exercises were also

*One highlight of the campaign was a family that came out to nearly every Let's Try It event – they were given a prize in recognition of their stellar attendance record, and other families started showing up together too.*

covered, and the champions fanned out to promote the programs. In addition to walking clubs, the volunteers initiated "Anywhere, Anytime" exercise workshops and clinics. Unexpected classes and initiatives developed, and the volunteer leaders – ranging in age from late 20s to 70s – took further training in order to enhance their knowledge and abilities.

Younger people in the community have been getting into the act as well, with the Erickson High School Grade 11 and 12 Leadership program designing an Elementary School Gym Blast event that encourages younger children to be more active and stick with it.

Another success in the Erickson area has been the Active Living Kit, which groups can borrow for free. The CDPI committee kicked in \$400 towards the kit, and another \$400 worth of sporting equipment was donated. It includes a whole baseball set, weight training equipment, volleyball set, yoga equipment, skates, skis, soccer set, and active living toys for young children. With a \$20 deposit, groups of all ages, ranging from family gatherings to teenagers looking to play some road hockey, have signed out sporting gear. The concept has gone over so well that the committee has secured funding to develop another kit for nearby Onanole.

With such a wide variety of activities being promoted, it's no surprise that active living has caught on in Erickson. One couple, for example, had never used resistance

training equipment before they attended a fitness centre orientation. Eight months later, they're continuing to use the facility regularly and report a noticeable change in their weight and how they feel.

**Contact Information:**

Russell Thorne

204-636-2294

keewaywellness@hotmail.com

Take Note

**Family Fitness Ideas:**

- Designate one evening as family fitness night. Each week, a different person designs the family workout that you will all do together. Whether it's swimming, rollerblading, walking, Frisbee golf, or a two-on-two basketball game—everyone gets to do something they enjoy, and your workout will never become dull.
- Have each family member pick an exercise at the beginning of the week and do as many reps as they can. Then train throughout the week with the goal of improving by the weekend.
- Combine exercise and household chores. On small pieces of paper, write down chores and body weight exercises. Throw the papers into a couple of hats and have everyone pick one of each.

[http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/fitness\\_articles.asp?id=382](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/fitness_articles.asp?id=382)