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Winkler

Living it Up! All Ages Benefit from Increased Physical Activity

The City of Winkler has taken a comprehensive approach to preventive health programs, offering a wide assortment of activities aimed at everyone from toddlers to seniors.

In “Shake, Rattle and Roll” toddlers learn running games and ball activities, work out with hula hoops, and march with instruments. Open to children ages two to four, the popular CDPI-funded, eight-week program has been a hit with participants and their parents.

“The moms made lots of comments about learning the importance of physical activity for their kids and got practical ideas they could take home,” said CDPI leader

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Other exercise programs sponsored by the CDPI include “Time to Play,” which targets Winkler’s Low German population and immigrants with a weekly morning session of physical activities and nutrition education. “Adapt the Fun for Everyone” enables elementary and high school students with disabilities to work out in a gym setting every week from October to May. The action moves to an outdoor pool in the summer months, and all 22 students reported improvements in strength, flexibility, endurance, and balance. A “Girls Time Out” offered hip-hop classes for Grades 5 to 8 girls while the boys learned how to do a proper gym workout in the “Guys Gym” program. Many of the participants were “at risk” students recommended by the school psychologist, but the classes were open to all.

Seniors in the city are also targeted with “Livin’ It Up!” – a five-week wellness program taught by a registered dietitian at the Winkler Senior Centre. The nutrition and cooking workshops feature light exercise activities, cooking demonstrations, tasty food samples, and lessons on how to make healthy, cost-effective recipes at home. Last year, in-house exercise sessions were also provided by a local gym owner for two people with disabilities who were receiving home care.

Walking Challenge Brings Community Together

Adults and students alike got involved in Winkler's inaugural Walking Challenge this spring, in which six workplaces and 32 school classrooms competed by keeping track of their daily walking distances over a four-week period. Prizes were up for grabs to the winning classroom, business, and the top individuals from both. CDPI organizers made and distributed trail maps of the city's 10 kilometres of walking trails. "We were trying to promote the trails with this Challenge," Falk said. "We wanted to make the community aware of healthy living options and thought walking was the easiest thing for everyone to be able to do."

Participants used the maps and pedometers to track their progress and added their personal kilometres to the

cumulative total of their classroom or workplace. Student Heidi Pauls took the top individual prize, a scooter from Canadian Tire, by walking a whopping 425 kilometres. Fourteen employees from Eden Mental Health Services took the best business honours with 1,635 km, while 29 Grade 6 students from Emerado Centennial won a free lunch from Subway by marching a grand total of 5,369 km! "It's something they can all do together; they're working towards something," said Falk. "It's a nice community thing, and it sort of brought everyone together." Plans are already underway to expand the Challenge next year into a community-wide event.

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Take Note

Benefits of Physical Activity in Young Children:

- Movement is an important part of a child's physical, mental, and emotional development.
- Activity satisfies a child's curiosity about movement.
- Games and activities allow for interacting with other children and developing social play.
- Activity develops positive lifelong attitudes to physical activity.
- Young children solve problems and gain success through challenges and exploration.
- Children who are active perform better at mental tasks.

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/6f/03.pdf

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/5407222825m761v0/?p=15deb9ec022446d3a915a2c39d1cfb0d&pi=4>

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Fitness Develops Confidence in Seniors and Students

Your granny might be doing more than simple stretching at her seniors' exercise class. She might be dribbling a basketball, shooting hoops, or learning how to throw a ball like she's never thrown before. The CDPI in Winkler has included group fitness classes for both seniors and mentally and physically challenged school students.

Instructor Cherrie Goertzen said it has been amazing to see both groups develop strength, confidence and pride as the program progressed.

"You should have seen the improvements from the beginning to the end of the program," she said. "It has renewed my love for group fitness. We had so much fun!"

Goertzen said the classes instilled fitness skills in the young students and helped seniors to reclaim similar skills.

The school system has good programming for physically and/or intellectually

impaired kids, but holding a class for skill development outside of the school setting allowed for a little extra attention to their needs. Because of the students' love for music, Goertzen – a Fitness Leader with the Manitoba Fitness Council – designed an exercise program that would incorporate all kinds of movement and make use of muscles in a new way. Balance work and agility work were combined with various patterns the students needed to remember. "Watching a kid advance in motor skills and memory is very rewarding," said Goertzen. In one case a little girl who had never moved on her own was placed on a scooter and to everyone's shock and delight she "recoiled her knees and moved on her own. It brought us all to tears."

The tears in the seniors' class were mostly from laughing so hard, they cried. "We laughed a lot," said Goertzen. The group worked on improving strength and balance using many of the same techniques that are effective with the children. The seniors, all women, used balance beams, scooters and basket balls to develop their skills. "Women were catching and throwing those balls like never before," said Goertzen. She added that feeling such freedom of movement will give the seniors better balance and confidence with simple tasks, such as walking outside on uneven surfaces.

The results of the fitness classes were similar and empowering for both groups. "They developed their strength and their memory and as they did that their confidence level came up as well as their sense of pride."

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Take Note

Seniors, Exercise, and Cognitive Function:

- Aerobic exercise appears to improve higher cognitive functions (planning, organization and working memory) in the elderly.
- One way physical training may help cognitive function in the elderly is by increasing their confidence in their abilities.
- A large-scale study of women aged 65 and older found that cognitive decline was least common in those who were most physically active.
- A large-scale study of men aged 71 and older found that those who walked less than a quarter of a mile a day were nearly twice as likely to develop dementia as those who walked more than two miles a day.

http://www.memory-key.com/Seniors/senior_research_exercise.htm