

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

CITY OF KELOWNA WINS AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE FROM BCRPA

Recreation Opportunities Coupon Program honoured with Program Excellence Award and Everybody gets to play™ – Okanagan Network honoured with PERC Award for Management Innovation & Ingenuity.

Richmond, BC (Friday, May 13, 2011) – The City of Kelowna has won two provincial Awards of Excellence from the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). The Program Excellence Award has been presented for the Recreation Opportunities Coupon Program, and the PERC Award for Management Innovation & Ingenuity has been awarded for the Everybody gets to play™ – Okanagan Network.

Kelowna's Recreation Opportunities Coupon Program helps reduce barriers to recreation opportunities. Working in partnership with more than 60 community service organizations throughout the City the program provides coupons to individuals and families who can benefit from low or no-cost access to recreation facilities. Distributed through these partner organizations, the coupons reach individuals and families with identified needs, eliminating the requirement of individuals to meet with City staff to gain access. Each coupon allows access to a variety of recreation programs and activities offered through the City of Kelowna. The ease of coupon access and redemption provides recognition and respect to the individuals using them. Coupons are accepted at city facilities without question, and any concerns regarding coupon use or possible misuse are addressed with the distributing organization rather than the individual redeeming the coupon.

"We applaud the City's coupon program for successfully reducing barriers to participation," states BCRPA Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Allard Strutt. "The Recreation Opportunities Coupon Program is not only an innovative take on a conventional program, it has provided a model of how exemplary customer service meets community social goals."

The Program Excellence Award recognizes creative, successful and innovative programs which may serve as an example of outstanding achievement in public recreation services programming.

The Everybody gets to play™ – Okanagan Network has brought together municipalities, recreation providers, social service organizations, schools and local businesses to provide open access to recreation and activities for individuals and families with limited financial means. The creation of the Everybody gets to play™ – Okanagan Network began in 2006 with a review of best practices in relation to access of community recreation programs and services for individuals in low social-economic situations in the City of Kelowna. After participating in Everybody gets to play™ workshops and two community forums during the Engagement and Awareness Phase, organizations recognized the importance of the formation of a formal community collaboration to address barriers to participation in recreation and agreed to continue to meet. The Network established a vision statement, mission statement, guiding principles and organizational and

communications structures, and a formal community-level plan for action was developed to continue moving the Network forward.

“The collaboration of community organizations through the Network is what makes this project creative and unique,” Strutt states. “Every community has its own specific barriers to participation, but Everybody gets to play™ – Okanagan Network has shown that if local service providers can focus on engagement and collaboration and form a solid network with other community organizations, there is potential to make positive changes with the community as a whole.”

The PERC Award for Management Innovation & Ingenuity recognizes the creative implementation of an idea to develop something that is unique and special that other organizations could adapt in their own settings. These are two of several awards presented at BCRPA’s Symposium today. The conference brings together members of the parks, recreation, physical activity and culture sector from around BC, including elected officials, volunteers, members of the business community and others. Richmond is the host community of this year’s event.

BACKGROUND:

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association is a not for profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active healthy lifestyles and communities in BC. Established in 1958, the Association is a central resource agency for members and stakeholders of the parks, recreation, physical activity and culture sector, providing leadership, training and support to help meet national, provincial and local priorities. Through a diverse network of partners and extensive programs and services, BCRPA actively advocates accessibility and inclusiveness to recreation and physical activity.

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