



Abbotsford Sets its Active Living Strategy in Motion

Written in April 2007



The Fraser Health Authority and its partners in the Abbotsford in motion health promotion strategy—the Abbotsford Community Health Committee (ACHC), the City of Abbotsford, School District 34, the Abbotsford News, the University College of the Fraser Valley and Envision Financial—are keeping the momentum going to encourage and motivate residents to engage in daily physical activity. In motion is having a notable impact on Abbotsford’s health by reaching out to schools, workplaces and the wider community at events.

LINKING THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Under the leadership of Fraser Health’s in motion Project Leader Wendy Creelman, community partners have come together to implement the program since its inception in 2003—initially modeled after the Saskatoon Health Region’s in motion strategy.

“We wanted to really make sure we were utilizing all the strengths of the partnerships and delivering what the partners wanted to deliver. So it was very consultative, very collaborative,” Creelman said. To put the ideas in motion, the partner organizations formed committees: steering, operating, marketing, events, children and youth, active adults and workplace wellness.

Additional partners that have since come onboard include the Fraser Valley Health Care Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart & Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Diabetes Association, Action Schools! BC and Canada on the Move. Fraser Health registered Abbotsford as an Active Community in fall 2005, linking in motion with that program.

“The way that we have tried to integrate [Active Communities] is by providing the tools that Active Communities provides and fanning those out to our champions,” said Creelman, who is Abbotsford’s Active Community Team Leader.

- Developed in motion physical activity strategy based on Saskatoon Health model
- Partnerships formed between Fraser Health Authority, Abbotsford Community Health Committee (ACHC), the City of Abbotsford, School District 34, The Abbotsford News, University College of the Fraser Valley and Envision Financial and many more
- Partnerships and sponsorships secured with local businesses
- Raising public awareness through community events and promotional materials
- Gained the support of local celebrities
- More than 90% of schools are in motion schools
- 25 schools registered with Action! Schools BC
- Developed workplace wellness programs
- Secured a \$2,150 BCRPA Active Communities grant
- Won numerous awards for in motion
- Conducting surveys measuring activity levels
- Launched www.abbotsfordinmotion.com

Abbotsford Info

- **Population:** 127,434 (BC Stats, 2005)
- **Region:** Lower Mainland
- **About Abbotsford:** Located in the Fraser Valley near the U.S. border between mountain ranges, it is the largest city in the Fraser Valley and the fifth largest in BC. Abbotsford offers plenty of indoor and outdoor sport and recreation opportunities, including curling/skating rinks, golf courses, lawn bowling, racquet clubs, aquatic centres, tennis courts, skateboard parks, fishing, camping, hiking, biking, walking, horseback riding, mountain biking, kayaking, river rafting and parks. Its main industries are agriculture, tourism, flower growing, manufacturing, processing, transportation, construction, trades and service.

(Sources: www.abbotsford.ca, www.bcadventure.com, www.hellobc.com)



Abbotsford Sets its Active Living Strategy in Motion, cont...

MOVING AWAY FROM CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The official in motion school launch in March 2005 brought 1,200 students from two middle schools out to Rotary Park to get involved in a Survivor-type fitness challenge. The following year's event brought out local celebrities including CTV's Kathy Kovacs, Canadian Idol finalist Shane Wiebe, several BC Lions players and Minister of State for ActNow BC Gordon Hogg.



Whenever an individual school signs on, the in motion team hosts a kick-off assembly, complete with the Survivor Challenge. In motion schools are encouraged to adopt an Action Schools! BC model.

"We work with Action Schools! BC and we recommend all our in motion schools also take part in that program to utilize the great tools they offer," Creelman said.

Now, 93% of Abbotsford's elementary and middle schools, both public and private, are part of in motion. These schools agree to work toward every child getting 30 minutes of physical activity every day. In motion supplies the schools with resources. A banner is a daily reminder that the school is in motion. The schools also designate champions, usually physical education teachers, who will motivate students, staff and parents. Each school comes up with creative activities: from

Tai Chi sessions to fitness breaks to fun games throughout the day.

"One of the real keys to our strategy is we're non-prescriptive," Creelman explained. *"We create an environment that supports physical activity. Our schools and workplaces have ideas already and we can nurture them with resources and tools. But for the most part, they take bits and pieces and then they make it their own. It's their initiative and focus. It's their environment and culture that they need to have a clear understanding of in terms of what's going to work and what's not. That is the strategy that came out of Saskatoon and it has been very successful for us."*

EMPLOYEES ON THE MOVE

In motion active workplace pilots kicked off in March 2005 and wrapped up a few months later. Of the five pilot work sites (Envision Financial, City Hall, the School District 34 Board office, Fraser Health on Marshall Road and the Abbotsford News), 147 employees participated, receiving incentives, prize draws and resources for logging their physical activities. In a follow-up survey, 67% of participants reported losing weight during the pilots. Elements of the pilots included workplace challenges, onsite classes, a fun night and lectures on nutrition. In motion created kits containing workplace challenge brochures, fitness logs, pedometer pointers, walk/run workout guides and tips on getting started. A \$2,150 BCRPA Active Communities grant went toward developing the kits. Now, two years later, more than 50 local workplaces are getting in motion to aim for 30 minutes of physical activity for every employee every day. Each in motion workplace has a champion who motivates the other employees.

"The strength of the in motion strategy is that it really permeates every corner of the community," Creelman said. *"So when you go into a workplace, most likely the person working there has a child in an in motion school, so they already get it. Having such a high awareness level among our residents has certainly helped for workplaces to adopt this."*

The City of Abbotsford's workplace wellness program has carried on past the pilot, with onsite fitness classes and employee incentives, such as the active employee free one-month pass to local recreation facilities.

In April 2007, Fraser Health began piloting a three-month in motion employee challenge, which extended from Abbotsford to Mission. The challenge aims to increase daily physical activity, consumption of vegetables and fruit, and attempts to stop smoking. Part of the challenge is a Race to Panama pedometer program, where employees log steps or convert activities into steps on a virtual website. During the challenge, Fraser Health employees showed their enthusiasm by getting active on Move for Health Day (May 10).

"We want our staff to be walking the talk in terms of demonstrating those types of healthy behaviors that are going to help to drive the cost of healthcare down," Creelman said.

In motion has been putting on Breakfasts of Champions (or Ambassador Breakfasts) to promote active workplaces. Abbotsford's Ambassador Network is made up of senior-level representatives from in motion's partner organizations, the mayor and council and school trustees. The breakfasts are avenues for in motion to get the word out about the benefits of getting employees physically active and

of active transportation. BCRPA also recently held an Active Transportation Workshop in Abbotsford.

“The decision makers need to understand how important it is that we start heading down this road,” Creelman said.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

A month-long, community-wide physical activity challenge in 2005 and 2006 called Fall in motion had people filling in activity logs then submitting them for chances to win prizes, including West Jet tickets to anywhere in Canada.

“We had about 100 prizes donated from businesses in the community,” Creelman said. In 2006, 600 people sent in activity logs during the challenge. Each year, the challenge starts off with a kick-off event on its first day.

On Canada Day this year (2007), in motion will be putting on an Across Canada Challenge event at Rotary Park. Participants will check off boxes on cards after they complete each of five activity stations at the event for a chance to win incentives.

In addition to putting on its own events, in motion supports and takes part in community events and presentations that have a physical activity component.

“We try as a strategy to link into those events that already exist,” Creelman

said. *“We don’t provide the programming—we support those that provide the programming. If they come to us and they want a prize or help to promote them or they want us to show up and say a few words about the importance of physical activity, we’ll be there.”*

MOVING FORWARD

In 2004, University College of the Fraser Valley completed a baseline survey to gauge the physical activity levels of Abbotsford residents. The results of the 769 responses showed that although 76% of respondents reported being physically active, 39% were active enough to gain health benefits.



The following month, an in motion marketing plan emerged. Marketing materials created for in motion included a website (www.abbotsfordinmotion.com), brochures, posters, advertisements, newsletters, in motion cards, certificates, activity logs and many more giveaways. Almost a year after the March 2005 official in motion launch, survey results revealed a 42% public awareness rate of the strategy.

In motion will be doing a follow-up measurement survey in September (2007). In addition, in motion tracks the number of schools onboard, the number of cham-

pions, press coverage, free advertising, in-kind contributions, the number of workplace champions, the number of events in motion supports, the number of people at the kick off events, the number of people participating in the Fall in motion challenge, incentives sales at parks and recreation facilities, and website hits.

In 2006, Creelman received a Fraser Health Above and Beyond award for collaborative partnerships, as well as a YWCA Women of Distinction award for her work with in motion. She also won a Community Leader award at the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards. Now after four and a half years, Creelman has announced she will be leaving in motion to head to Kelowna in the summer of 2007.

“I think a lot has been accomplished and it will continue just fine when I move on and that’s very, very important to me,” Creelman said.

Filling her role is Tracy Steere, who is continuing Creelman’s work and steering the future direction of in motion. Steere is keeping the community events and the school and workplace programs going, while working with the Canadian Cancer Society to increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity among Abbotsford’s South Asian population. Looking ahead, Steere is working on expanding and tying in the ActNow BC goals to in motion’s physical activity strategy to promote healthy living.

Delta Recreation Makes the Grade

Written in April 2007

People of all ages in Delta are getting more physically active, thanks to programs launched by the Delta Parks, Recreation and Culture Department’s Active Community Team. The community has made significant headway developing its

programming since registering as an Active Community in March 2006.

Delta participated in a Discovery Research baseline measurement survey of physical activity levels, coordinated by the BC Recreation and Parks Association

through its Active Communities Initiative in 2006. The results showed low cost or free recreational opportunities would encourage 51% of residents to be more physically active. So Delta has come up with creative ways to do just that.