



Free Event gives Township of Langley Children a Shot at Sports

June 2008



More than a thousand children and parents tried a new sport or activity, from scuba diving to gymnastics, at the launch event for GO Active Langley—the Township's own Active Communities initiative.

The Township Try It! Project event took place on a Langley School District-wide professional development day during Spirit of BC Week in February. Sport and recreation organizations came out to Walnut Grove Community Centre to host 19 interactive activity stations. Hon. Gordon Hogg, Minister of State for ActNow BC, kicked off the day, along with Township Councillor Howie Vickberg, and Recreation, Culture, and Parks Director David Leavers.

The crowds of children coming through the doors to the free event—some with parents and some with day camps—doubled the expected turnout. Not only did the children get away from sitting in front of their TV's and computers that day, but they had fun doing it.

"The kids were very excited because they felt like it was a PNE in Langley," said Lesley Visser, Community Recreation Manager who leads the Township's Active Communities initiative. *"Everything was very active. There were line-ups for everything. There was so much enthusiasm in the building—smiles and laughter everywhere you looked."*

The kids walked around with Passports to Fun and Fitness, receiving stamps for each activity. The passports included information on how to get involved in that particular activity after the event day.

"It was an opportunity for kids to say, 'This is what I like, this is what I didn't like, here's what I could look to sign up for,'" Visser said. And parents were participating with their kids.

"The parents absolutely loved it," said Keith Miller, the Township's Special Events Programmer for Recreation, Culture and Parks. *"It's not every day that they get to see their kids trying a whole bunch of different sports and seeing what it is that they like and enjoy."*

The Langley Rugby Club estimated that 400 kids aged 3-12 threw a rugby ball at their station, and most left with big smiles. Langley Diving introduced scuba diving to 90 people in the pool. Other activities included badminton, gymnastics, soccer, hockey, basketball, martial arts, water polo, dance, fitness, baseball, and a 2010 Legacies Now SportFit™ station.

To originally bring those sport and recreation groups onboard for the event, the Township's Active Communities team contacted groups that rented space within the Township's recreation facilities and park services.



"From there, we started getting people contacting us wanting to be a part of it," Visser recalled. *"We had to turn people away because we had no space. It was amazing."*

Miller noted the event was an opportunity to inform those community sport groups about the GO Active Langley initiative and get them engaged.

"Many of them have indicated they would like to be involved in future events," Miller said. *"Community sport partners are looking for opportunities to get further involved and enhance the programs and services they offer. This is an excellent avenue for them to get the word out about what they do."*

The Township staff worked with schools, particularly through principals, to spread the word out about the event. A free shuttle bus was available to pick up groups from community centres in the outlying areas.

The Try It! event was funded through a \$35,000 Union of BC Municipalities grant, a \$5,000 contribution from the Township, a \$300 active event grant from the BC Recreation and Parks Association, and in-kind contributions from sport and recreation groups. The Township's recreation department staffed the event.

Lower Mainland – Township of Langley

Langley Highlights



“We wouldn’t have been able to be that successful if it wasn’t for the [UBCM] grant,” Visser noted. “The grant really enabled us to step out of what we normally would see as our scope.”

Having provincial and local politicians at the event helped attract media attention, with two local papers covering the Try It! Project.

“It really legitimized what we were doing and showed that we had the backing and support of government,” Visser said.

For the evening portion of the Try It! event, more than 200 adults and youth went to a free resource fair at George Preston Recreation Centre. There were more than 25 interactive information booths where adults and youth could find out about sport and recreation opportunities in the community. Free passes and prizes were also given away at the booths. The first 100 people at the fair received free tickets to the Langley Chiefs hockey game at the George Preston Arena, and the rest of the fair’s attendees received 2-for-1 admission.

In addition, Township Recreation, Culture, and Parks offered a Spirit of BC Week Loonie/Toonie Admission Days for drop-in recreation, fitness, and aquatics programs at the WC Blair Recreation Centre and the Walnut Grove Community Centre during the week of the launch event to promote the event and the overall GO Active Langley plan.

GO Active Langley aims to promote healthy lifestyles; build a healthy community by increasing awareness of the benefits of regular physical activity; increase physical activity levels amongst Township of Langley residents by creating new opportunities for participation in recreation, sport and physical activity; and strengthen community partners to enhance resident access to information about active lifestyles.

The GO Active plan—now in its final stages of approvals—called for the initiative to be launched during Spirit of BC Week at the kids’ Try It! event.

- Launched its GO Active Langley initiative at a kids’ Try It! event with Minister Hogg
- Partnered with community sport and recreation groups for the Try It! event
- Developed GO Active Langley plan with community stakeholders
- Low-cost GO Active after-school program for disadvantaged youth
- GO Active Speaker Series on opportunities/benefits of physical activity for at-risk populations
- Hired a GO Active Langley Coordinator on staff
- Received grants from UBCM (\$35,000) and BCRPA (\$5,000 and \$300)
- Move for Health Day events: seniors’ chair exercise program; pre-school play day at McLeod Athletic Park
- BCRPA subsidy for baseline measurement survey of physical activity levels
- Township commissioned an Ipsos-Reid survey of physical activity rates
- 33 registered Action Schools! in School District 35

Lower Mainland – Township of Langley

Langley Info



"The kids were very excited because they felt like it was a PNE in Langley,"

- Lesley Visser

"It was good that we targeted the school children," Visser said. "It's the children who eventually are going to be learning the life-long skills to be active, so that was the place to start. That gave us a good focus for who we were inviting as community organizations as well."

A \$5,000 grant from BCRPA through Active Communities funded development of the plan. Miller took the lead in developing the plan as part of his Masters thesis focusing on Sport & Leisure Management through the University of BC's Human Kinetics department. He met with key community stakeholders—including School District 35, Fraser Health Authority and Kwantlen First Nation—to develop the plan.

"It's been a great way to engage many of the community partners and learn about the ways to bring a health promotion initiative to the specific needs of the Township," Miller said.

The savings from not hiring a consultant for the plan development went back into funding the launch event and developing

the GO Active Langley brand. The final plan is expected to go before the Recreation, Culture and Parks Commission for approval this fall.

In the meantime, the Township continues to offer Try It! opportunities with one-time classes advertised in the leisure guide, in partnership with community organizations.

"We are continuing to nurture those relationships through ongoing partnerships—scuba, rugby—those programs that we traditionally don't offer as Recreation, Culture & Parks," Visser said. "We will have Try Its somewhere within the season positioned so that people can try it out then register for the next season."

The GO Active team is now working on running an after-school program for youth and an educational Speaker Series, also funded through the UBCM grant. And with the recent hiring of a GO Active Langley Coordinator, the Township's new Active Communities programs should keep the momentum going in the community.

Population: 97,125 (BC Stats 2005)

- Municipal organization for Fort Langley, Aldergrove, Murrayville, Walnut Grove, Brookwood/Fernridge & Willowbrook
- Main industries: agriculture, manufacturing, service and retail
- Home to the Kwantlen First Nation
- George Preston Recreation Centre, Aldergrove Arena, Aldergrove Kinsmen Centre, Willowbrook Recreation Centre, WC Blair Recreation Centre, Walnut Grove Community Centre, National Training Rink, Sportsplex, 2 outdoor pools
- Parks, skateboard parks, playing fields, ball diamonds, trails, jogging tracks, spray parks, tennis courts, lacrosse boxes, ball hockey courts

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