

Kelowna's Activity Levels get a Kick Start

June 2008



After being one of the first local governments to take on the provincial 20% physical activity challenge in 2005, the City of Kelowna and its partners continue leading the way to promote active living.

Kelowna dubbed its Active Communities initiative KickStart: Be Active Stay Active, which has become a household name in the area due to its successful branding. From its Park and Play program for families to its week of free activities for people over age 50, “Kelownans” of all ages are reaping the benefits of the City’s investment in Active Communities. Even workplaces have kick-started their activity levels thanks to the KickStart team’s efforts.

The City’s Sport and Recreation division of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services department spearheaded the initiative, backed by strong support from mayor and council, senior management, and the Regional District of the Central Okanagan. The City’s Active Community Strategy plan was developed using international research and consultations with community stakeholders.

The strategy aimed to shift the focus from traditional recreation programming to community health behaviour promotion.

To achieve this, the City hosted an Active Communities strategy workshop in 2005 with approximately 70 stakeholders taking part.

“In looking at trying to get community buy-in, we needed to have a dedicated movement to facilitate that,” said Scott Isfan, City of Kelowna Community Recreation Coordinator. *“Out of all our successes that’s been probably the biggest thing that we’ve done right so far is starting like that.”*

The network of partners—from the Interior Health Authority and School District 23 to not-for-profit organizations and corporate sponsors—are spreading the active living message. The network expanded the reach across the community beyond the already-active people involved in City recreation programs.

“It’s been great to be able to spread the word through our community organizations,” Isfan said. *“In starting that community movement we were really trying to broaden our base and focus in on that 20% of the population that aren’t active now or are thinking about getting active but for whatever reason are just lacking those certain motivators to get off the couch and start to get moving.”*

To help it achieve the goals and action steps set out in the strategy, the City designated two full-time staff positions to Active Communities/KickStart. In addition, council continues to fund KickStart initiatives in the City budget each year, including running community programs and events, raising awareness of KickStart, and measuring physical activity levels through an annual Ipsos Reid survey.

“We’ve been very blessed so far in the program that we have a very supportive management team—our mayor and council and senior management are fully onboard with the Active Communities movement,” Isfan said. *“And we’re really grateful for all the help that we get through Active Communities as well.”*

On top of funding support from council, KickStart has received a big boost to implement its strategy with \$35,000 grants awarded through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Health Promotion Fund for three years running.

In 2006, the UBCM grant funded a passport to activity program for both the community and children within the School District for two months. Across the District, 8,300 children from 34 schools participated in the program. A similar program in the wider community brought 12,000 people to four kickoff events. Each week, the passport booklets contained a different theme with ideas for getting active. Participants pledged to do an hour of activity each day for the eight weeks, and they recorded their activities in their booklets for a chance to win prizes.

The following year, the second UBCM grant funded a pedometer pilot program for Grade 7 students. All Grade 7’s in the School District receive laptops as part of their curriculum, so they were chosen to participate in the online steps tracking program. During the four months, 2,065 students and 280 support staff were logging their steps.

“Whole classes were picking it up and competing against one another within each school,” Isfan said. *“It drew atten-*

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- Scott Isfan

tion to how active they were. It put that front-of-mind thinking that if I'm counting my steps and I'm not doing very much then I need to get out there and do some more. We know if we can get kids to start to talk the talk and take that home it's going to work with the parents."

This year, a third UBCM grant is funding a workplace wellness initiative. KickStart instructors are going into workplaces for one-hour active workplace sessions. A local branch of Interior Savings Credit Union had 100% participation rate among its employees.

"We really tried to look at a broad range of businesses so that we would reach way into the community to have a very diverse base of people doing the active workplace program," Isfan said.

The program builds on KickStart's Stairway to Health program in 2006, funded through Interior Health. The Stairway to Health initiative brought KickStart signs to elevators in office buildings across the city encouraging people to take the stairs as a way to incorporate physical activity into the workday.

"We're a busy community," Isfan noted. "Everyone's lives are extremely full. We try to pack more and more into our everyday life. It's fantastic to be able to walk into our technology towers and be able to

see our point-of-decision signage on each of the buildings in front of the elevators."

In addition to recommending an active workplace program, the strategic plan highlighted the need to decentralize recreation opportunities and get people outside in their neighbourhoods. One such opportunity is the Park and Play program launched this summer. The KickStart team will host community events in a different park in the city each weeknight in the summer.

"It's getting people out to recreate; it's bringing families together and giving people a chance to go to their local neighbourhood parks," Isfan said.

With most of the action steps from the strategic plan already underway or completed within its first three years, KickStart is increasing activity levels among its residents and providing more opportunities to get moving leading up to 2010 and beyond.



- Hosted an Active Communities strategy workshop with community stakeholders in 2005
- Formed a KickStart Kelowna Network of partners
- Developed an Active Communities strategic plan
- Developed KickStart website: www.kickstartkelowna.ca
- Produced a KickStart promotional video
- Ran a passport program in schools and the community in 2006
- Grade 7 pedometer program in 2007
- Received pedometers from ActNow BC Activity Challenge grants program
- Started a Stairway to Health program with point-of-decision prompt signs at elevators in 2006
- Received grants from UBCM (3 years running), Interior Health Authority, BCRPA through Active Communities (\$300 for Move for Health Day event)
- City funds 2 full-time Active Communities staff positions and annual budget for KickStart programs
- Implementing active workplace initiative in businesses
- Play in the Park neighbourhood events every weekday evening this summer with games, sports & activities
- KickStart Action Teams visit community summer events to promote KickStart
- Secured sponsorships with local businesses
- Created Kelowna & Area Recreation Parks & Trails Map with 70,000 copies distributed in community
- Partnered with Capital News to include a weekly KickStart newspaper column and to produce a biannual KickStart magazine
- Host agency for Interior Health "Community Action for Health Initiative", providing grants to organizations delivering active living initiatives

Kelowna Info

Population: 109,490 (BC Stats 2005)

- Largest city in the Okanagan Valley located along Lake Okanagan
- Named a Cultural Capital of Canada for its population size in 2004
- Summer activities: Hiking, biking, golfing, swimming, water sports, fishing, horseback riding
- Winter activities: Skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing
- Main industries: agriculture, tourism, service sector, forestry

www.kelowna.ca, www.hellobc.com