

# Competitive scene awaits area's jump rope team

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Shelby DesRoches negotiates the rope with equal parts agility and creativity.

Twists and flips come in rapid succession — accompanied by catchy tunes and a captive audience.

No, this isn't your traditional fitness routine. "It's so fun that you don't clue in to the fact that it's a workout," said the 18-year-old rural Miltonian. "Fitness is kind of the hidden aspect of it."

The middle daughter in a family of super skippers, Shelby's ready to help mom Isabel — owner/operator of the locally-run Jump, Dance, Fit Academy (JDFA) — take her jump rope team into the competitive realm.

"We've been touring for years, but I feel now's the time for the team to be more than that," said the elder DesRoches, who left the corporate world years ago to start up her own multi-faceted fitness school that includes a jump rope program (with recreational and competitive levels), dance classes, yoga and Glee voice lessons run out of Campbellville's St. George's Anglican Church. "I like to think of it as what's old is new again. It's the evolution



Isabel DesRoches and daughters (from left) Chanel, Shelby and Shaelyn get in some practice.  
Riziero Vertolli / Metroland West Media Group

of jump rope."

That refers to the various tricks incorporated into the freestyle side of the still burgeoning sport, which also features speed and endurance categories.

DesRoches was fully involved in dance and kickboxing classes when her oldest daughter Chanel told her about joining her school's jump rope team in support of the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

As someone with a varied background in fitness, she embraced the idea with open arms. "I thought we're already doing all this stuff (tricks) here," recalled DesRoches, who's since built up the region's first jump rope club that's made numerous visits to area schools in Milton and throughout Halton. "There's a lot of kids that don't like sports and aren't into dance either, so this is a great activity for them."

Open to boys and girls nine and up, the jump rope program's competitive side will feature regular tutelage by 15-time world champion Elvis Malcolm, whose maneuvers can often seem intimidating to the young skippers.

"At first we thought he was crazy, but then we went home and practiced until we got it right," said Shelby, who's assisting mom with the team that younger sister Shaelyn is now part of.

The inexpensive, can-be-done-anywhere aspect of jump rope makes it an appealing activity, notes DesRoches.

She adds that the program has drawn a number of boxers, swimmers and hockey players over the years and greatly benefited their reaction time.

"Speaking with the parents, I've found the kids love to work on their skills... without having to be told to practise."

Her JDFA Competitive team already has 16 members, with a target of 20 for the inaugural year. The team — which will have an average age of 13 to 15 — will train roughly four hours a week and be part of at least two competitions this season.

Those wishing to join are asked to contact DesRoches at [jumpdancefitca@gmail.com](mailto:jumpdancefitca@gmail.com).

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