

# Participarks catch fire in Canada

Few projects in recent years have caught fire quite like the Kinsmen involvement in "Participarks."

Across the country, dozens of these fitness parks have been springing up on land adjoining rivers, existing recreational activities an unused parkland.

Behind the effort stand the Kinsmen working hand in hand with Participaction, the federal fitness campaign group.

Participaction supplies the know-how and Kinsmen across the country find appropriate land, raise the required funds and in most cases, get their exercise early by hoisting shovels, saws, hammers and wheelbarrows.

## FOR THE FAMILY

When they finish, their community is left with a fitness trail designed for family use, usually on a year-round basis.

The first participark showed up in British Columbia when the Port Coquitlam Kinsmen club led the bandwagon. Two years later, the Kinsmen Club of Foothills City, Calgary, opened No. 50. At that stage, the national Kinsmen club led the bandwagon. Two years later, the Kinsmen Club of Foothills City, Calgary, opened No. 50. At that stage, the national Kinsmen club estimated there were 50 or 60 participarks either in the planning or development stage.

What's a Participark?  
Norm Woods, director of national projects for Participaction, says it's the Kinsmen-Participaction name for a fitness trail popular in Europe and normally known as a "vita parcours."

Kinsmen got together with Participaction a little over three years ago on the project and Participaction came up with the design for a fitness trail with 11 specific exercise stations.

"We designed Participark and wrote up the construction guide which is provided to any Kinsmen Club interested in considering the idea," said Woods.

Later, the Sun Life Insurance company got involved by financing Participark promotion and brochures, construction guides and so on. Sun Life also underwrite the cost of special Participark signs installed in every park.

Woods estimated if the average community was going to install its own fitness trail, the project would cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Because of the three-part involvement and because it's always a local community project, the community gets an "interesting and motivating" facility for no initial cost.

Parks are normally turned over to the community for ongoing maintenance.

Woods said the fitness trail concept would simply not have developed to anywhere near the extent it has without the involvement of the Kinsmen club.

"It's not a high priority for the average parks and recreation department," he said. "And most of these are in smaller communities which would not undertake such a project without someone else's help."



ALL THE RAGE

"From our standpoint, we're a promotional and educational agency, so as much as we liked the concept, it wasn't until the Kinsmen came looking for a project with national emphasis that we could even consider the idea."

By sometime this year, the Kinsmen estimate 100 parks will be open and the national organization isn't stopping to rest on its laurels.

Gerry Allen, national director, in an issue of Kin Magazine, challenged each of the more than 500 Kinsmen clubs across the country to get involved.

He challenged Kinsmen clubs to have a look at their community and find some obvious spot where a participark can be located.

Allen said the old and young benefit. He noted the parks are inexpensive and require little manpower to construct while providing a facility for a great number of people.

He also urged clubs not to stop when their parks are built.

"Select an energetic chairman and organize competitions between school grades, school rivals, other service groups... but make sure we use it. We could all do with the exercise and it's inexpensive fun as well."

As if to prove Allen's point, the Calgary park's opening was attended by thousands who jammed Glenmore Park for the occasion. By the time the 50th park was opened,

every province of Canada was involved.

## 30 ACRE SITE

In Mississauga, Ont., the Kinsmen participark became an integral element in a plan to expand and develop 30 acres of belonging to the school board and the municipality.

The project is to include a track, three soccer pitches, a joint football-soccer field, an environmental playground and a rest area with benches and picnic tables in addition to the fitness park.

The project was in the talking stages for three years before the Kinsmen were approached and took over the financial end of the plan. The club applied for provincial funds and received \$46,000, half the estimated total cost.

Remaining funds were sought in fund canvasses and special projects.

## BEAUTIFUL PARK SITE

In Truro, N.S., the Kinsmen Club got permission to establish their participark in famous Victoria Park. Their participark is dedicated to Dr. Jim Vibert, a prominent Truro surgeon killed while jogging. The surgeon's wife cut the ribbon in a ceremony which attracted 1,500 participants.

The Truro project posed several unusual challenges due to a variation of 150 feet in the terrain. A nearby brook had to be crossed twice by bridges and the same brook had to be diverted to prevent flooding.

The result was a picturesque course for the jogger or skier or for a family walk in an otherwise vacant area.

CANADA'S 50<sup>TH</sup> PARTICIPARK  
PRESENTED TO THE CITIZENS OF CALGARY BY...  
THE KINSMEN CLUB OF THE FOOTHILLS CITY



CLUB OPENS 50TH PARTICIPARK

## Club V-P learns about Kinsmen fellowship

Jim Madigan of the Kinsmen Club of Marystown, Nfld. was a long way from home when his club held its executive installation — but that didn't mean he missed it.

Madigan was in Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital with an eye infection after being elected vice-president of the Marystown Kinsmen.

Hal Rogers, founder of Kinsmen, was attending the opening of a Kinsmen participark in Thornhill, Ont., when he heard about the situation.

What resulted was a telephone hookup

between Madigan's hospital room and a specially-called general meeting of the Marystown club.

In the 25-minute call, he was installed in his position by the club founder himself with District 8 Vice-Governor Tony Duerden and Past Deputy Governor Gerry Connolly at his bedside.

Rogers and Madigan chatted with the Newfoundland group in the unique ceremony which probably established some sort of record for Kinsmen fellowship.

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