

# Lifestyles

## Sportsball promotes self-esteem in children

By LINDSAY BRUCE

Special to The Champion

The Milton Leisure Centre is home to a program called Sportsball, which promotes self-esteem and self-confidence in children.

Sportsball has been in town for the past two years, and gives kids ranging in age from 3-and-a-half to 7-and-a-half years the opportunity to learn the basics of soccer, baseball, hockey, volleyball, tennis, golf, and basketball.

Instructor Pamela Blakley said that although the kids walk away from the program with an understanding of sports, they're not the most important aspect of the class.

"Having fun is what it's all about," she said.

The cut-off age for the program is seven-and-a-half years, but kids can stay on longer if they're interested.

"We'll keep kids longer if they're having fun. We have a nine-year-old who still participates in Oakville," said Ms Blakley.

### Children learn coordination

The program teaches children basic coordination and a little background about each sport, for instance the number of players on a team, how the point system works, and how to throw a ball properly for baseball.

But Ms Blakley said there's always time for fun and games.

"We do it in a fun way, and we give the kids confidence," she said.

Valerie Class-Knight brings her four-year-old son Paul to the leisure centre to take part in the program and said that he has gotten a lot out of the activities.

"He has learned about teamwork, cooperation, and sharing," said Ms Class-Knight.

The mother also said the kids have a great time playing Sportsball, and that it's a shame more parents don't know about the program.

Ms Blakley said the price of \$178 may be holding some parents back, but moms like Ms Class-Knight say the program is worth it.

"I think it's a very reasonable price. It's too bad it hasn't taken off in Milton," she

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**BEVERLY THIBODEAU**

said.

Beverly Thibodeau also brings her children to the program. She said she can't say enough good things about Sportsball.

"My oldest son is a little shy, and the program has given him such confidence," she said.

Ms Thibodeau also said the price of the program is reasonable because it's a quality program, and the amount spent is worth every penny.

"The price is reasonable for what the kids are getting out of it," she said.

Both mothers agree that the caring instructors are what make the program such a success.

"The instructors are really great with the kids. They seem to know what to say to them to get them motivated," said Ms Thibodeau.

Because Sportsball doesn't run throughout the summer, Ms Thibodeau said her children make her play the games with them at home, and she has to pretend she's the instructor.

She said that when the program returns in September, she will definitely register her kids again.

### Parents are worried about fate of Sportsball program

Ms Thibodeau and Ms Class-Knight are both worried that the program may end if enrollment doesn't increase.

"The moms and dads that come here, we don't want the program to go away. There is a waiting list for Sportsball in Oakville," said Ms Class-Knight.

The 12-week program runs until June 16, and new children are welcome every week to sign up.

For more information, contact the leisure centre at 878-SWIM.

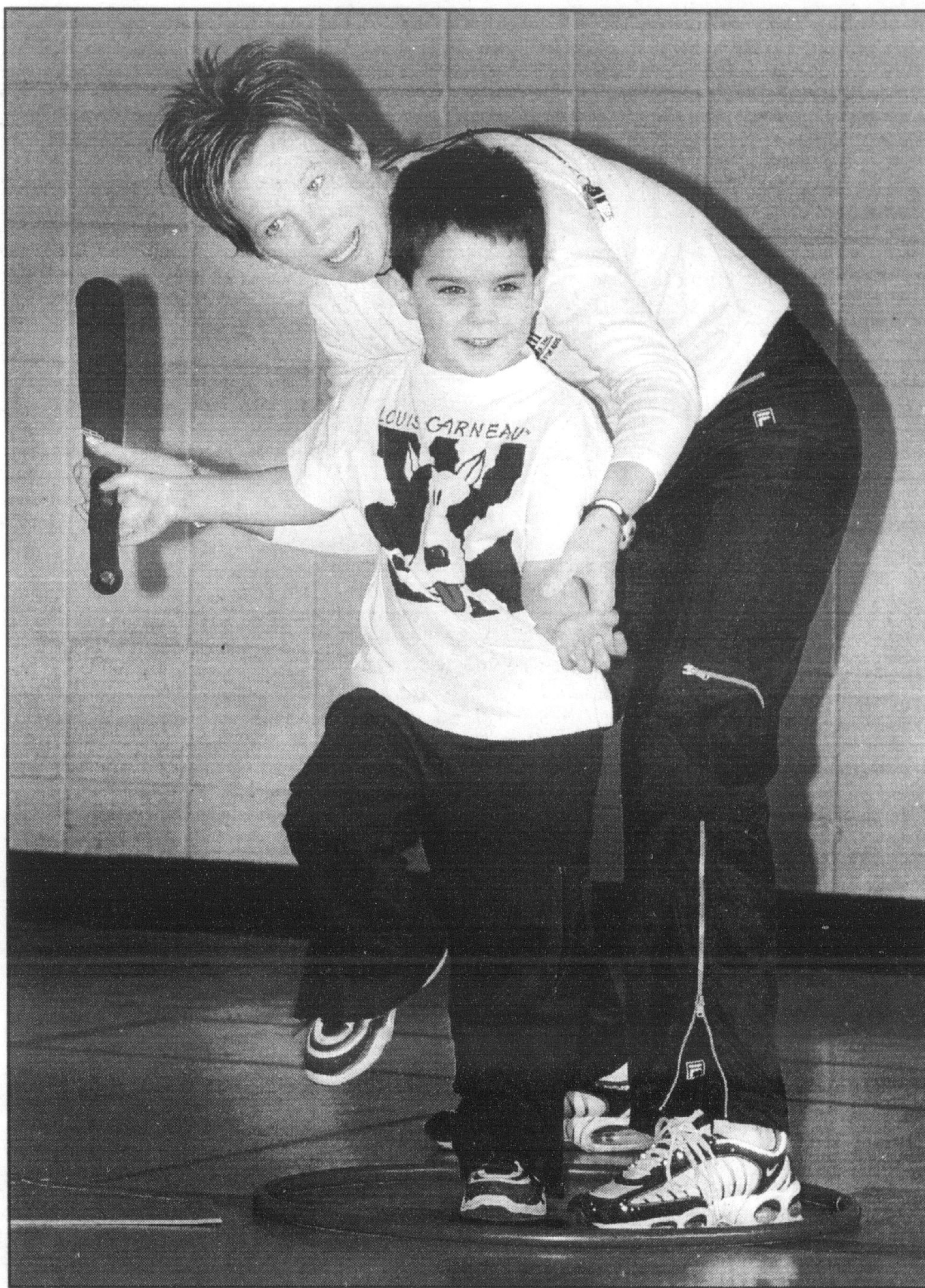


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Three-year-old Jake Viana gets a little help with his baseball swing from instructor Pamela Blakley in the kids' Sportsball program at the Milton Leisure Centre.

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