

Lifestyles

Being active year-round important for all



Bobbi-Jo Gerdes helps her eight-year-old daughter Kayla put on her snowshoes before heading out on the trail at Crawford Lake Conservation Area. Conservation Halton has a number of activities available to help area residents beat those pesky winter blues.

Photo by
BARRIE ERSKINE

New Halton Region kit has answer to cabin fever

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

It's cold out, and your natural tendency is to cocoon inside with the kids where it's warm. Why force them to play outside when that's the last thing they want to do?

Unfortunately, that attitude doesn't lead to the healthiest lifestyle.

Being active year-round is important for everyone, young or old, says the Halton Region Health Department. Although most people decrease their physical activity during the winter, it shouldn't be that way. The Halton Region Health Department, together with the Central West Physical Activity Network, has developed a WinterActive Cabin Fever Kit to help families spice up their winter days and take the dreariness out of winter activities.

"In research, we've found that people become less active in winter. One reason is that it's cold. But the other is that people aren't aware of what's out there (to do)," said Monica Marquis, health promoter for the Region's Heart Health and Cancer Prevention Program.

Kits full of info

The kits include information for parents on family events happening around Milton, as well as information on Halton's conservation areas and recreation facilities. There are also ideas for many creative outdoor games and activities as having fun doesn't need to cost a thing, Ms Marquis said.

According to the Halton Region Health Department, children and youth need at least 60 minutes of moderate activity each day, plus 30 minutes of vigorous activity. This can be built up throughout the day in five to 10-minute increments.

Many children aren't as active as they should be because they watch a lot of TV, spend a lot of time playing video games and surf the Internet, Ms Marquis said.

The problem is increased by the fact that students aren't required to take physical education classes in school.

But it's not just kids who need to be active.

"Adults need to be active too," Ms Marquis said, adding that 30 minutes to one hour of physical activity is recommended. "Why not be active together? This kit is designed to give people lots of ways to do that."

It's not always easy to get the kids outside. But Ms Marquis said it's important. Even if activities aren't planned for them, simply being outside will encourage children to get the exercise they need.

"The best way to get them outside is to keep them warm. Dress them in layers. The outer layer should be waterproof. As soon as they're out moving around, they quickly forget it's cold. Just as long as they stay active," Ms Marquis said.

One of the best things parents can do for their kids is to lead by example.

"The mom's physical activity level is a

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MONICA MARQUIS

good indication of how the kids will be," Ms Marquis said.

Residents of Halton Region are fortunate to live in an area with so many conservation areas, Ms Marquis said. There are 11 Conservation Halton parks.

Susan O'Neil, marketing co-ordinator for Conservation Halton, said residents are normally appreciative of these parks.

"Parks here are regarded differently from conservation areas in other regions. Our residents recognize their value," Ms O'Neil said.

Still, it's easy to forget their splendour when they're right in residents' backyards.

"There is the tendency to take them for granted, but people recognize the resources we have," Ms O'Neil said.

Winter activities abound in Halton's conservation areas.

Ski buffs flock to the groomed cross-country trails yearly at Crawford Lake, Mountsberg, Rattlesnake Point and Hilton Falls. Those who prefer alpine skiing or snow boarding visit Kelso/Glen Eden, where there are 12 slopes for all skill levels. Skating facilities, as well as horse-drawn sleigh rides are available at Mountsberg Conservation Area. And, of course, there's winter hiking at all the conservation parks.

Snowshoeing fun, inexpensive

If your children have never tried snowshoeing, why not create some memories this winter? At Crawford Lake, you can embark upon a unique snowshoe adventure. Rent some snowshoes for \$10 per pair and hit the trails.

There are many special events happening this winter at Halton's conservation areas. This Sunday, Crawford Lake will hold its Snowflakes and Snowsnakes event from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This day will feature legends in the longhouse, marshmallow roasts, native games and craft making. The cost is \$5 per person and children aged under 4 years are admitted free.

Sweetwater season at Crawford Lake will begin February 22 and run until April 13 on weekends and holidays, and daily during the March Break. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., you can experience native style maple demonstrations in the reconstructed Iroquoian Village. On March 16, a special Sweetwater Day celebration at Crawford Lake from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. will feature

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