

Reach for the Rainbow available in Stouffville

Reach for the Rainbow, an initiative allowing physically and mentally challenged youngsters to join regular leisure programs, is now available in Stouffville.

Integrating special needs campers into its camp program last summer was so successful the town decided to extend the one-on-one program to winter and spring programming. All 16 spots available for special needs campers were filled last summer.

That was gratifying to Micole Ongman, the town's program and aquatics supervisor, who wasn't sure what the response would be.

Reach for the Rainbow helps

campers and others work with special needs people. Whitchurch-Stouffville is one of a few municipalities partnering with the program.

Staff are hired to work exclusively with the special needs children. They meet with the parents and the youngster taking the program to determine how best to help the child.

All staff, not just those working with the special needs youngsters, are given training, Ms Ongman noted.

Parents pay for the leisure services programs as usual, but Reach for the Rainbow and government grants subsidize additional costs.

Our Town

with Hannelore Volpe

For information on the program, call 905-642-7529, ext. 323.

Winter Fest Jan. 22 at Musselman's Lake

Outdoor winter fun is coming to Musselman's Lake Jan. 22, thanks to the efforts of The Friends of Musselman's Lake, an environmental group in the Ballantrae area.

Winter Fest features activities for all ages run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This is the first year for the Musselman's Lake polar bear swim. Friends treasurer Ralph Toner, local environmentalist Mark Carroll and resident Ruth LeBlanc have already volunteered to leap into the frigid waters that day. Firefighters with the Whitchurch-Stouffville fire department will be on hand with ice water rescue skills and equipment.

An Ottawa Senators hockey jersey signed by four players, including Jason Spezza, will be raffled off at the event. The jersey is valued at around \$300, said Mark Harper, chairperson of the organization. Raffle tickets are \$20 each. The funds go back to the Friends of

Musselman's Lake to maintain its website and support environmental projects.

For those who prefer more traditional winter activities, there is skating on the lake (weather permitting), a barbecue and other refreshments, scavenger hunt and horse-drawn wagon rides. Participants can build bat or bird boxes or a bird feeder for a toonie each. Everyone can try snow mini-putting and other activities.

Mr. Carroll is organizing a three-on-three hockey tournament for the event. To join and for more information, e-mail to environment1st@rogers.com

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