

READY TO COOK UP A STORM?

Town programs offer plenty besides basketball, swimming, fitness

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Sure, you can enroll in a municipal program and shoot hoops, spike a volleyball, go swimming or whack a badminton shuttle. But how about carpentry and cooking for children?

These are among the off-the-wall activities offered by York Region municipalities.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, playball, power play hockey, daytime pre-school skating, our time together and pre-school introduction to dance are among the busiest programs, according to program and aquatic supervisor Micole Ongman.

For children, recreational and competitive skipping, basketball, tennis, hockey camps, summer day camp, junior carpenters, children and family yoga and kick-boxing are the busiest programs.

Hit TV shows such as Dancing With the Stars or Iron Chef could influence people to take up related activities



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Instructor Jane Booker teaches Hailey Deeks (left) and Brenna Sulman how to swim in the Lebovic Leisure Centre pool in Stouffville. Playball, power play hockey, daytime pre-school skating, our time together and pre-school introduction to dance are the town's busiest pre-school programs

In the adult sector, the popularity list is topped by volleyball, pilates, yoga, baby and me pilates, fitness memberships, belly dancing, stroller fitness, nordic walking and triathlon training.

In Richmond Hill, basketball has the largest enrollment among children and youths, said Darlene Joslin, the town's director of recreation and culture.

Sportball, summer day camp and swimming lessons are the next popular programs for children younger than 13. Swimming lessons, an Amazing Race event and Youth Week event top the list for those between 13 to 18.

Badminton, yoga, dance, volleyball and fitness programs hog the spotlight among adults.

Swimming lessons lead the way in Newmarket, followed by summer camps, adult ballroom dancing and, for the younger crowd, pre-school programming and hip hop, recreation and administration manager Becky Bell said.

The town's indoor skateboard park, in the old Film Factory theatre on Charles Street, is another huge draw, she noted. And that

translates into busy skateboarding lessons, even for entire families.

Junior chef (a learn-to-cook program) wins the popularity contest for Aurora children, programs and community development manager Melodie McKay said.

Other popular children's offerings include a basketball skill development and game play program, theatre and dance, directors cut (computer animation) and any arts and craft program.

Aurora teenagers gravitate toward home alone (for children who may be left home for short periods of time), on the move (a learn-to-run program), cook up a storm (learn to cook), basketball and babysitters training.

A child's view, focusing on learning and fun, is the busiest program for pre-schoolers.

Kindergym and toddlers gym, playball, pint-sized pottery and twinkling toes, a pre-school movement and basic dance, are also popular.

For adults, golf lessons, triath-

lon training, pilates, dancing with elegance and yoga are the five top programs.

The continuing success of Tiger Woods, along with Canadian Stephen Ames, might be pushing the popularity of golf programs, Ms McKay said, especially after the winter months.

'If you learn to skate it won't save your life. But swimming can.'

Basketball leads the way amongst Markham children and young teenagers, according to recreation programs manager Lori Wells. Badminton, skating, indoor tennis and guitar lessons were next on the list.

Yoga grabbed the spotlight for those 16 and older, followed by ballroom and Latin dance, volleyball, badminton and Latin line dancing.

A large Asian population in

Markham and Richmond Hill is the cause for busy badminton programs in those towns, Ms Joslin and Ms Wells said.

As for the popularity of the towns' youth basketball programs, they pointed to the success of the NBA Toronto Raptors, along with the sport being provided in many parks at no cost.

"When we have three-on-three tournaments, we can't keep up with the demand," Ms Joslin said.

Swimming, basketball, gymnastics, karate and taekwondo have the biggest registration among children in Vaughan, according to Angela Dalessandro of the city's recreation and culture department.

A child development leadership program, hip hop and ballroom dancing, karate and taekwondo lead the way with youths, along with with karate, squash and aquatic leadership programs.

Adults are registering for beginner ballroom dancing, belly dancing, pilates, tai chi and line dancing.

Some programs generate interest because of their educational value.

Aurora's Home Alone program is popular because parents view it as a great tool to help children feel comfortable on their own, Ms McKay said.

Ms Bell believes Newmarket's swimming program is popular because it can save lives.

"If you learn to skate it won't save your life. But swimming can," she said.

"There's been a strong push in life saving and drowning prevention based on the number of water-related incidents through the years."

Hit TV shows such as Dancing With the Stars or Iron Chef could influence people to take up related activities, Ms Bell speculated.

Major sporting events, such as Olympics, can also spike interest in certain programs.

Check out www.townofws.com for more on Whitchurch-Stouffville's programs.



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