

# Programs & Services

## Youth Program Highlights

*There are many great programs and youth initiatives in Canada. The following is just a sprinkling of the innovative, fun, successful recreation and cultural projects that have been developed by, with, and for young Canadians. Some have a long history, others are new; some are programs, others are more policy oriented; some are provocative, others mainstream, but all are worth reading about. This Programs and Services section of the Leisure Trends Monitor concludes with a list of common elements found in these and other stellar leisure services for youth.*



In response to issues faced by young people, including substance abuse, discrimination, violence and a feeling of hopelessness, a 250-acre conservation authority site, half an hour north of Toronto has become the centre for Trails Youth Initiatives (TYI). Created in 1992 by Peter Dalglish and Jim Hayhurst Sr., its mission is to challenge and equip vulnerable youth to become contributing members of their communities. This initiative is based on the belief that outdoor education can create a long-term positive sustainable change in individuals.

Youth selected for this program must be just completing grade six, live in one of the target neighbourhoods in Toronto, and be able to commit one weekend per month during the

### Trails Youth Initiatives *Toronto, Ontario*

school year and two weeks in the summer for the next four or five years. Trails candidates are recommended by schools, community groups and simply through "word-of-mouth". Eighty-eight youth participate in this year-round program, which has operated for more than a decade without any form of government funding.

In the past 13 years, TYI has had some outstanding results:

- 76% of TYI graduates go to college or university, compared to 24% of pupils in their school; the retention rate exceeds 95% with youth who were previously regularly truant from school and have had difficulties making any type of commitment;
- Trails Youth Initiatives has been granted Independent School status by the Ministry of Education and offers 3.5 high school credits to participants;
- In 2001, 14 of 20 TYI graduates received the prestigious Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.

Wilderness and outdoor education experiences can have a notable and lasting effect on young people. With a ratio of 6 staff to every 20 participants, this initiative has had remarkable impacts.

As Russell, a grade 10 student, fourth-year Trails participant, noted, "I never thought I could be a leader; that has all changed since being at Trails. Everything I've learned here I've been able to apply: teamwork, cooperation, trust."

*For more information, visit*

[www.trails.ca](http://www.trails.ca)

*Contact Executive Director Kevin Farrell  
at 416-787-2457*

*"Each year Trails kids do two major outreach projects. From building outhouses, to cutting trails, visiting old age homes, helping prepare a small village for a Pow-Wow, Trails kids are exposed to skill developing, knowledge enhancing and confidence building opportunities to broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding."*

*Trails Youth Initiatives Bi-Annual Report 2002-03*

### Summer Active Living Express

*Newfoundland & Labrador Parks/ Recreation Association*

The Healthy Active Living Express started 10 years ago by the Newfoundland & Labrador Parks/ Recreation Association (NLPRA). The Express is a special events cruiser that promotes fun physical activities throughout the province. With a van and 2 or 3 summer staff the Association took bookings for a 3 hour show that promoted "active living" through Wilbur the robotic teddy bear, parachute games and hands-on inflatable play units.

The program was revised to emphasize easy ways to keep active with cooperative games, "calci-cow", Community Leader and Children's "Active Pacs" filled with simple, equipment like a hackisac, frisbee, sidewalk chalk, skipping rope and more. Group activities promote cooperation, team spirit, sportsmanship and participation and include reading circles, musical, creative and active games. The Physical Activity Centre includes a new jump rope program, relay races and bicycle rodeo. "Calci-Cow", sponsored by the School Milk Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, also integrates the message of the importance of healthy eating.

The NLPRA is targeting 50 communities and 10,000 children for its 2004 summer program. The Association is especially aimed at the smaller, rural and remote areas, attempting to build some support capacity in those regions. Every community that books the Express is eligible to win a grand prize that includes resources such as a 12' parachute, skipping ropes and the like, which will continue to foster Active Living locally.

*For more information, visit:*

<http://www.nlptra.ca/>

*Tel. 709729-3892*



## Youth Program Highlights

### Action Sport Coalition *Mississauga, ON*



*An existing BMX park in Carleton Place, Ontario*

Not yet three years old, Action Sport Coalition (ASC), an affiliated volunteer group with the City of Mississauga, advocates for “action sports”. ASC has an executive of seven and membership list of over 600. As Joanne Uhlmann explained, “We needed a point of contact...This group has provided a better connection to youth that we were not reaching or communicating with.”

The story began when residents complained about youth creating bike jumps in a forested area of the City. In fact, as Uhlmann went to explore the complaint she came upon a busy group, keenly reconstructing a series of jumps that had been previously dismantled by City park staff! Convinced that the on-going set-up/teardown scenario could not continue, staff and youth began to explore alternatives. They eventually relocated to a hydro corridor that the City was currently leasing. The problem in the forested areas disappeared.

As a sidebar, one cyclist who was involved in finding a solution for these off-road cyclists, subsequently went back to postsecondary school in urban planning, has started his own

construction company, recently completed a dirt bike track for Muskoka Woods, and is about to create a park for Intrawest at Collingwood, Ontario.

The next activity that arose was on the steps of City Hall, which proved to be a great improvisational skate park site. At the time the City had 4 skateboard and 5 BMX stores (excluding Canadian Tire and other department stores) that sold skateboards and bikes, but no location for youth to actually skate or bike.

Fortunately, the local Kinsmen service club wanted a unique project to work on. They met with the now organized, Action Sport Coalition. They were impressed with the dedication, sincerity and organization of the ASC and ultimately decided to support the concept of a Skate Park. The Kinsmen gave \$28,000; the ASC collected 500 signatures in support of the park; the City initiated an on-line survey to garner feedback; West 49, a well-known skate retailer donated \$10,000 and another local shop, Full Tilt, put out a glass jar for donations and came up

with \$3,000 donated pocket change.

The ASC applied and received a Trillium grant to develop a website, run three events, develop T-shirts, and buy a tent and banner. One of the events was a competition covered by CTV and City Pulse.

The City supports the ASC through the provision of meeting space, maintaining their membership list, providing shovels, rakes, etc for the Work Day events at Clarkson Park, and also through a supportive community development approach. The Coalition advocates on behalf of youth action sports, provides design input on new projects, works with the City to provide spaces for members of the community that have not traditionally been served in the past.

The ASC made a deputation to City Council on June 16, 2004, to persuade the City to build a BMX Park next to the Hershey Centre and across from the new Skate Park. Council is supportive and has referred the matter back to staff to research further and make a recommendation. This summer staff will be costing the proposal, sourcing out an appropriate location and sponsorship. It's anticipated that the project will subsequently move forward.

The City of Mississauga has had some success in meeting the “action sport” needs of youth in their community, in part, because:

- The Coalition has been articulate and focused;
- City staff, at every level, have been very committed to better understanding and meeting the needs of these youth;
- City Council became aware and educated on issues and solutions, due to efforts of the ASC and staff;
- There was a collective effort by Council, staff and ASC to find creative solutions.

*For more information, visit:*

[www.asc-group.org](http://www.asc-group.org)

*or call Joanne Uhlmann at 905-896-5346*

