

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Improving Access to Recreation Key to Better Public Health

Health Unit and Partners Assessing Recreation Barriers and Opportunities for Local Children

Last night, more than **50?** participants in the “Every Child Gets to Play” workshop joined forces to strategize ways of helping local children in financial need get better access to recreation.

“We know that participating in recreational activities dramatically improves children’s physical and mental health, and this benefits us all for years to come,” said Sue Mulhall, Physical Activity Program Coordinator of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit. “Last night’s workshop was an important first step in our community to determine the best way to increase access to recreation for all children in the city and county.”

The Health Unit, together with the City of Peterborough, Heart & Stroke Foundation and the YMCA Peterborough, hosted the two-hour workshop which featured guest speaker Brenda Whitehead, Port Hope’s Program Manager of Parks, Recreation and Culture. Ms. Whitehead highlighted the success of Northumberland County developing community-wide policies to improve access to recreation for low-income families.

Participants also learned that participating in quality recreational activities enables children to:

- gain a sense of mastery
- develop positive self-esteem
- develop their creativity
- enhance their social skills
- explore and manipulate their environment

Improved access to recreation for families on low-income also provides a number of other health and social benefits, such as:

- increasing academic, social, interpersonal competence
- reducing risky behaviours (such as alcohol, drugs, smoking) and school drop-out
- reducing isolation and mental health problems
- reducing youth crime

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NEWS RELEASE

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The host organizations have initiated a survey to assess what kinds of recreational opportunities and barriers exist in Peterborough City and County. Once this research is completed, it is hoped that a committee will form to implement ways of reducing barriers, such as affordability of equipment and registration fees, transportation, or physical barriers for those with disabilities.

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For further information, please contact:

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