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ACTIVATE AURORA: Not just about the kids!

By Ron Weese

Recently, I have had discussions with many people of all ages and with varied interests about how to ?activate? Aurora.
It has been an enlightening experience and I thank all those who have taken the time to share opinions. There is no shortage of them.
One important theme has arisen: it is the notion that Activate Aurora is focused on children and the problem of obesity and type-2 diabetes in that population. People seem aware of our efforts to work with schools, teachers and sport providers of physical activity to kids.
All agree that it is a strategy that makes sense, because if we build movement skills and physical activity early, then people acquire competence as movers and confidence to continue throughout their life.
Building an active community however goes beyond the kids and schools.
I recently attended the Older Adults Network meeting of Activate Aurora, where twelve leaders of programs offered in Aurora were present to discuss activating adults in our community. This Network has reviewed the size of the adult population in our Town and is now reviewing the services being offered. Surveys are being prepared with the help of Dr. Michelle Silver, Assistant Professor of Anthropology/Health Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus and the Institute of Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation.
The resulting analyses will help identify gaps in service levels and move forward with training and programming. Our Seniors Association is integrally involved, as are CHATS, local Seniors Residences and the Municipality through the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. Of course, Southlake Regional Health Centre is at the table. In fact, most organizations who work with older adults are involved, and more are joining each month.
Some interesting information has been uncovered. The most recent Community Health Survey has identified adult obesity rates. Our own 2016 Aurora census data shows the size of the adult population by five-year bands for both genders. These studies show that Aurora's adult population is consistent with the baby-boomer influence seen elsewhere. Plainly put, Aurora's adult population is growing and programs for them are needed to help them get or stay active.
Activity patterns have also been studied and it shows that each person has a unique activity ?trajectory?; that is, every person can trace their physical activity pattern as they age. For adults, this trajectory often gets altered. Marriage and kids, a job or job change, an illness or injury or financial difficulties can cause lifestyle changes that pull them off their trajectory. For some reason, in adulthood they don't often re-engage. Re-engagement strategies appear vital for them returning to their normally active lifestyles.
For adults who have never been very active, inactivity can be traced back to a lack of skill acquisition and movement confidence. Most adults report that they had limited interest or opportunities for physical education in early years or they didn't participate in extra-curricular sport and recreation. Helping these folks build fundamental movement skills in a supportive environment is now referred to as ?functional fitness'. Its purpose is to help adults become better ?movers? and attain the confidence needed to get out and be active. More to come on this in future columns.

Activate Aurora is working with our local providers through the life of the project to bring activities for all ages. Join US! At www.activateaurora.com to stay informed and learn how you can participate.