

ACTIVATE AURORA: Lofty Goals

By Ron Weese

Activate Aurora is based on one foundation: It is that if we are to increase the activity levels of our population then we have to help people make changes in their lives. Change is difficult.

I am proud to live in a Community where sport, recreation and physical activity of all kinds are supported. The Mayor's Task Force on Physical Activity is unheard of elsewhere. We have 41 Sport Organizations in Sport Aurora who deliver hundreds of Programs to thousands of residents and families. These are done mostly through volunteers who give tens of thousands of hours annually to support these Organizations. Municipal Recreation also does their job well by providing unique Programs of instruction.

Commercial providers of activity also bring dance, martial arts, fitness and a host of other activities to everyone. But no one really knows how much. We're going to find out. Because by finding out, we will know where service gaps are and where our resources should be spent.

Sport Aurora is now working with their Member organizations to determine how many participants are active in their sports; what genders and ages they serve. We are also asking the same question to the Municipal Recreation Department who keep such statistics. The Seniors Association and the newly formed Older Adult Network are being surveyed. We will be asking the commercial providers in Town about their participants as well as anyone else who brings activity to life here in Aurora. Cyclists and trail-users are being counted as are Programs for girls and women. Those with physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities are being polled. Families who are struggling financially are in the mix. When we are finished, we will know just how active we really are and only then will we have a baseline from which to grow. No one will be left out.

Let me share some interesting statistics that were presented at our Older Adults Network meeting this week. In our Town of about 54,000 people, the 2016 census shows we have 27,699 adults over the age of 45. That is half our population. So, we ask the question ?how is 50% of our population being served with physical activity.?

Our Network is now identifying the actual number of adults in this age range who participate in programs of all types. Is there a hypothesis? Yes. I believe we will find that the results will show that, (like the National average) no more than 5% of this cohort achieve the recommended amount of physical activity daily. We will then get busy to build the capacity needed to deliver programs and build a more active community.

Why is this important? No one has done this before, so we are breaking new ground. Aurora is the first to propose this cross-sectorial, collective impact project to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and they are keenly interested in how this can be done elsewhere. We are breaking some ground in this little community. Another reason to be proud of where we live.

Making Aurora ?Canada's Most Active Community? is a great goal. ?Audacious,? it has been said. We agree with that adjective by the way. But we also know that without lofty goals you shoot too low. Golfer Zach Johnson, who is by all rights a high-performer, said it best for me when he stated ?When you're trying to accomplish lofty goals, and when you're attacking something of great magnitude, you have to have help.? We are fortunate in this Town to have lot of expertise and more importantly, cooperative helpful people who want to be a part of this movement. We at Activate Aurora invite everyone to inquire. Go to our web site at www.activateaurora.com so you can learn how to become involved and help us meet our 'lofty' goal.