

Healthy Kids Challenge plants summer seeds at St. Joseph



By Brock Weir

Students are now in the home stretch before packing up their books for a well-earned summer vacation but, as the school year winds to a close, local leaders are hoping they've put down the solid foundation of a healthy and active summer.

Aurora's Healthy Kids Community Challenge was at St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School on Friday for a day of fun and games, along with healthy activities and lessons on healthy eating.

Formed into teams, groups divided by the colours of their shirts ? usually coinciding with the colour of a healthy fruit or vegetable ? fanned out across the school, and into surrounding green spaces, for a packed schedule of nature exploration, yoga, Zumba, and even a sample or two of Kambucha.

?It's year end and we're getting them to have physical activity in mind going into the summer,? said Gemma Goldstein, Program Coordinator for the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, providing Mayor Geoff Dawe and The Auroran a tour of the ongoing activities. ?In each group's schedule there are different aspects of physical activities. We're going to be doing things in Town throughout the summer, but we want to keep it in their minds.

?When the school puts so much energy into it, you know you've got a winner and so far so good!?

Through Friday's sticky heat, students braved the sun for outdoor Zumba lessons, obstacle courses facilitated by Sport Aurora, volleyball games, and nature hikes courtesy of Forests Ontario.

Inside, things were a bit more laid back with quiet yoga, speed stacking, and the sampling of healthy go-to staples.

The gym, however, was a different story, where Coach Steve took on a barrage of plastic balls pelted at him by the students. It was a good warm-up, he said, for what's in store.

?I teach kids of all ages different sports skills without having to worry about game play, without having to worry about winning or losing, and it is all about having fun while learning,? he said. ?There is no pressure, which is very important, because the kids are young and they get very upset if they don't score or if the team doesn't win.

?The main idea is to have kids use their sports skills as a way to learn life skills. One of the main things is a lot of kids don't understand failure. A lot of kids are so scared of failure they won't even try but my program is about teaching kids it's okay to fail. And it's not just okay to fail, you have to fail before you succeed at something.?

Friday's fun was one of the final capstones to Principal Christine de Haas' time at St. Joseph as she prepares to take leave for a new

posting in Newmarket. Working with Gemma, the Town, Sport Aurora, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, and the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, has been a pleasure and the kids have learned a lot, she said.

?It is just amazing; the kids are learning so much about physical literacy and healthy eating and I am just so grateful for this opportunity,? she said. ?It is such a wonderful community for the kids to be educated.?