



AAARD

Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham

AAARD Update

Research has indicated that approximately 2.5% of low income residents living in Durham Region access subsidy to register for recreation services; this is much lower than the 20% average of the general population who participate in registered recreation services and programs. In order to address this gap, the Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham (AAARD) Committee has been established.

AAARD has conducted research related to barriers that prevent individuals from accessing recreation programs, from this research they have developed guiding principles to assist in addressing these gaps. With the participation of over 22 municipal and not for profit organizations, the Committee is working together to increase access to registered recreation services and program for low income residents. In order to gain commitment from the AAARD partners to work collaboratively to advance access to affordable recreation in Durham, a charter has been developed. The objectives of the Committee and a copy of the AAARD Report and Charter will be shared with Durham Region Health and Social Services Committee, municipal councils and community organizations' boards in the first quarter of 2014. A charter signing in the second quarter of 2014 has been proposed; the signing of the charter would demonstrate a commitment from municipal and community partners to examine their own policies and practices to address what each provider can do to improve affordable access to recreation in our communities.

The Business Case for Investing in Recreation for Low Income Residents

Dr. Gina Browne of McMaster University has conducted numerous research studies to identify the results of providing recreation and added supports to residents from low income backgrounds on social assistance. Participants were provided with access to recreational pursuits, childcare and other social and health related supports. The results centred on study participants finding work earlier and getting off of social assistance sooner, as well as a greater sense of health and well being. Participants also reported fewer visits to doctors' offices and hospital emergency departments. Dr. Browne's research demonstrated that there is a return on the investment of providing accessible recreation as balanced off by subsequent savings to other social and medical programs. The Committee, Advancing Access to Affordable Recreation in Durham, has an interest in pursuing a similar pilot project in Durham in the future.

Make a Difference

In September 2013, the Durham District School Board (DDSB) launched a pilot project in select Oshawa elementary schools entitled, “Make a Difference – an Oshawa Early Years Initiative.” The goal of the “Make a Difference” program is to ensure that young children in DDSB schools in Oshawa have access to programs and opportunities that can address the impacts of poverty on students’ development and long term success.

The goal of the Make a Difference initiative is to ensure a multi-faceted approach is in place to support our youngest learners and their families, to help ensure all students, especially our most vulnerable, have a solid foundation in place in the earliest years of learning.

Participating DDSB elementary schools, along with community partners, will provide young learners and their families with a range of programs and community-based supports.

Programs will include:

- Nutrition/breakfast programs
- Vision, dental and hearing screening
- Ongoing use of focus groups to engage the community
- Full service-centred schools offering a range of programs to meet the needs of the community
- Parent and Family Literacy Centres
- Parent activities/workshops to support community needs
- Creation of an Opportunity Gap Action Plan
- Intervention programs
- Use of Early Development Instrument (EDI) to plan, develop and measure programs
- Kindergarten support programs
- Affordable high quality early years and child care programs
- Targeted oral language programs

The Make a Difference program will focus on interventions that address the three priorities of the Early Years initiatives: school readiness; reducing the achievement gap; and connecting families and community support services.

For more information and to receive the full report, visit www.ddsb.ca or email lepine_stacey@durham.edu.on.ca

For more information on AAARD:

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Organizations that are involved with AAARD

- Abilities Centre
- Boys and Girls Club of Durham
- Brock Community Health Centre
- Canadian Tire Jumpstart
- City of Oshawa
- City of Pickering
- Municipality of Clarington
- Community Development Council Durham
- Durham District School Board
- Durham Catholic District School Board
- Girls Inc. Durham
- Grandview Children’s Centre
- Region of Durham –Social Services
- Region of Durham- Health Department
- Their Opportunity
- Town of Ajax
- Town of Whitby
- Township of Brock
- Township of Scugog
- Township of Uxbridge
- Tucker Reid & Associates
- YMCA- Oshawa