



## Children's Treatment Network

### Camps for All Kids

Every morning before he goes to summer camp, Jolen packs his knapsack, looks at his calendar and gets ready for the day ahead. "He's grinning from ear to ear," says his mother Jennifer. "He's just so excited about going and everyone there is always happy to see him."

Without the support of Newmarket Parks, Recreation and Culture, York Support Services Network and Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York, this happy-go-lucky and affectionate 13-year-old from Newmarket might not have been able to join his friends at camp.

Jolen, who has Down Syndrome, is among more than 450 children with disabilities who are enjoying summer camp in York Region this year. Through inclusive recreation programs, these children receive one-to-one support at camp from specially trained Inclusion Facilitators. Inclusive recreation services are now being offered throughout municipal and private camps in Newmarket, Aurora, Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Georgina and Kettleby.

Jolen's mother Jennifer says that inclusive recreation programs have been an important part of Jolen's life and development over the past three years. "There simply isn't enough staff to give him the extra attention he needs in daycare programs," she says. "He sometimes needs an extra push to join in games - someone who will go that extra mile for him."

That extra assistance is provided by the trained Inclusion Facilitators who support campers with special needs. Two of these counselors, affectionately known by their camp nicknames "Leaks" and "Pickles" have both worked with Jolen at the Kids Place Day Camp held at Denne Recreation Centre in Newmarket. "They're awesome and Jolen is crazy about them," says Jennifer. "Even more important is the fact that having Jolen at the program benefits other children as well because they can learn more about kids with special needs. He's so loved and they always give a cheer when he comes back after a day off."

"Every child should have an opportunity to experience a wide range of recreation activities regardless of their ability," says Jennifer Ralph, Inclusive Recreation Coordinator for York Support Services Network (YSSN). YSSN's Inclusive Recreation Resource Service works in partnership with municipal, private and non-profit recreation providers. Together they work to promote inclusive camps, swimming, sports and a variety of other activities for all to enjoy.

She stresses that it's the partnerships that have made the program such a success. "We're working to partner with more municipalities and agencies so we can continue to remove barriers, provide training for more Inclusion Facilitators and expand opportunities."



**2007 Newmarket summer campers cheer on camp counselor "Leaks" and Jolen, a 13-year old camper with special needs during the Parachute game at Newmarket's Kids Place Camp at Denne Recreation Centre**

This year the Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York has also provided funding support for Inclusive Recreation Services. "Recreation departments and service organizations like York Support Services Network are working hard on developing and expanding community-based recreation programs to support kids with special needs," says Bob Morton, CEO, Children's Treatment Network.

Lindsay Sorensen, Recreation Programmer, Town of Newmarket Parks, Recreation and Culture Department, points out that everyone is benefiting from these efforts. "Participants and staff have benefited greatly through valuable training, on-site visits and consultations. Families who use our service are thrilled with the level of support we provide, our professionalism and the quality of our programs. Together we are making a difference for these children."

Jolen's mother Jennifer couldn't agree more. "Every day Jolen wakes up excited about the day ahead. Inclusive recreation is such a wonderful thing for any child - whether they have special needs or not. I'm just so happy there's something like this out there."

To find out more about inclusive recreation services in your area, contact Children's Treatment Network at 1-866-377-0286 ([www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca](http://www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca)), or Jennifer Ralph, York Support Services Network at 905-722-6484 x 230; or your Municipal Parks and Recreation Department. Demand for inclusive recreation services is high, so be sure to register now for next year.

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