

Inclusive Recreation Brings The Joy Of Summer Camp To Kids With Special Needs

The Sabourin triplets in Barrie are pretty excited about their first summer camp experience. But without the support of Parks and Recreation, Catulpa Community Support Services and Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York these inseparable four year olds might not have been able to spend their week together.

Two of the triplets have special needs. Sabrina has cerebral palsy so she needs help walking; Colin has Hurlers Syndrome, a condition that affects hearing and development. Both are crazy about their brother Dylan, the natural born leader of the trio. As their mother Sharon says, "What Dylan does, the others follow."

The Sabourins are among more than 400 children with disabilities who are enjoying a summer camp in Simcoe County this year. Through inclusive recreation programs, these kids receive one-on-one support at camp from specially trained counselors and more. Inclusive recreation services are now being offered through more than 100 municipal Parks and Recreation and YMCA programs in Barrie, Orillia, Bradford, Base Borden, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Midland, New Tecumseth, Innisfil and the Township of Ramara.

year we're assisting over 400. Most of these kids wouldn't have this experience without the support of the community and local organizations."

This year Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York has also provided funding support so that programs can continue to hire and train inclusion counselors and run skill building clinics for kids with special needs. "Recreation departments and service organizations like Catulpa 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.

As a person with a brother who has special needs, Marcia Feddes, Superintendent of Recreation Services for the City of Orillia, says inclusive recreation is near and dear to her heart. "All of us involved in this are committed to equalizing access to recreation opportunities for these kids."

The biggest bonus she says is the power that partnerships bring to the process. "It helps us get funding and allows everyone to better support parents so they don't have to go through 10 extra steps to get their kids registered."

As far as Susan Haskim-Quintal is concerned, inclusive recreation programs have made her life – and Sylvie's – much better. "I can't tell you how much it means to us that she can be part of a summer camp. She just loves to be around other children – it makes her smile."

To find out more about inclusive recreation services in your area and available subsidies, contact Children's Treatment Network at 1-866-377-0286 (www.ctn-simcoeyork.ca) or Nancy Snow, Catulpa Community Support Services at 705-733-3227 ext. 245 (www.catulpa.on.ca) or your municipal Parks and Recreation department. Demand for inclusive recreation services is high, so be sure to register now for next year.



4-year old triplets Sabrina, Dylan and Colin (centre left to right) take a sandbox break with Inclusion Counsellors Katherine (far left) and Alex (far right) during Barrie's Kinder Fun Camp at East Bayfield Recreation Centre

Programs like these have been a vital resource over the years for parents like Orillia's Susan Haskim-Quintal, whose 16-year-old daughter has global developmental delay. This summer Sylvie is attending a day camp at Couchiching Heights Elementary School in Orillia. And though she can't communicate in words, her mother can see the joy in Sylvie's face when her counselor and fellow campers greet her in the morning. "She won't develop greatly in her life, but having children around really motivates her."

According to Nancy Snow, Inclusive Recreation Resource Coordinator for Catulpa, the demand for these programs has grown tremendously in Simcoe. "When we started eight years ago, we had 14 kids with special needs attending camps. This



There's smiling faces all around as Mom and Grandpa visit Barrie triplets Dylan (left), Colin (centre) and Sabrina (right) at Barrie's Kinder Fun Camp at East Bayfield Recreation Centre