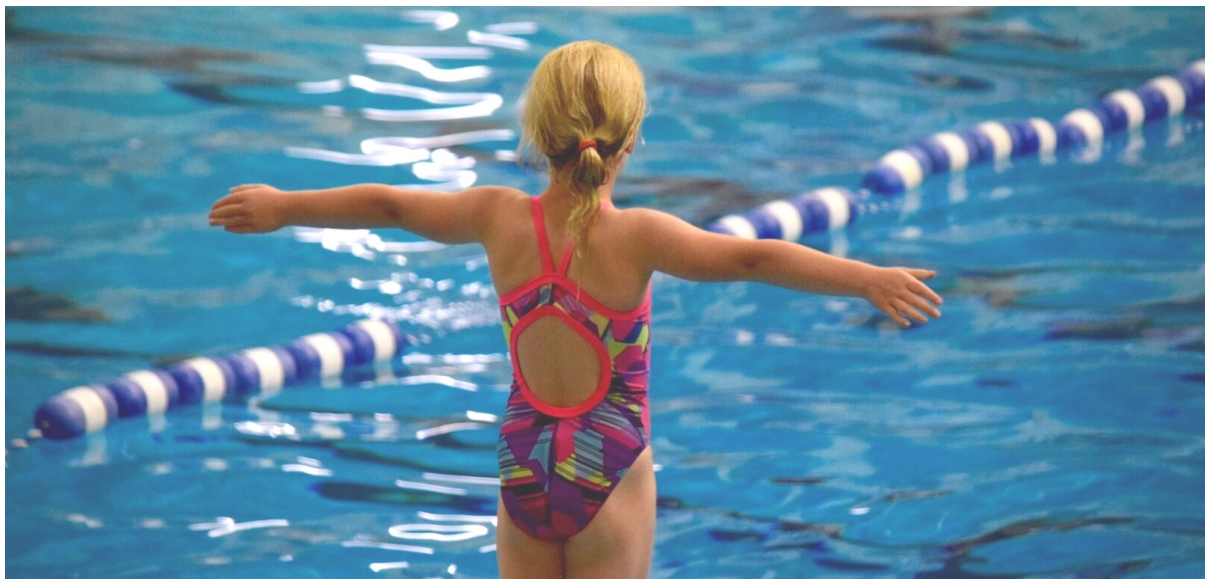




Newsletter 2021



Pay it Forward

BY DOUG EDDINGTON

When life doesn't go quite as planned, the last thing you should have to worry about is whether you're able to afford to keep your kids enrolled in their extra curriculars. For one single mother of four, this was an area where PRO Kids has been able to provide some relief.

Five years ago, with four active children in tow, this mom had no idea how quickly things were about to change. The kids had been involved in a wide variety of programs, including hockey, soccer, musical theatre, and baseball. Sudden life changes led to financial insecurities that made it challenging to keep the children registered in the programs they had previously enjoyed. When finances are stretched thin, recreational activities are often skipped in favour of food or other necessities. After being referred by an acquaintance, the mother reached out to PRO Kids to see what was available.

Through PRO Kids, this single mother has been able to keep her four kids actively engaged in the activities they were already involved in, as well as new ones. Their involvement in PRO Kids has provided consistency and familiarity during times of uncertainty, while also providing opportunities for team building, socializing, physical development and a great sense of fun. Access to affordable activities has made a significant difference in the physical and mental health for the whole family—mom included.

Like most parents, this mom wanted her children to have opportunities to learn new things and be active. When her financial situation changed, reaching out for extra help was hard to do. At first, she felt embarrassed to admit she needed some extra help, but knew she wanted to do what was best for her kids. Once she reached out to PRO Kids, the warm welcome she

received helped alleviate her worries. The staff were ready and willing to help get the children registered in recreational opportunities, and to help get access to all the necessary equipment. Through PRO Kids, mom was able to feel pride in seeing her kids back doing the things they loved, while also giving the family much needed stability and opportunities for kids and mom to socialize with other families.

PRO Kids has been able to provide this family a much-needed sense of security. Five years later, this mom still highly recommends PRO Kids—either as a service to families who find themselves in need of non-judgmental support, or as a great cause for those who are looking to make a donation that makes a direct impact on children and families in Thunder Bay. "PRO Kids is an awesome program for all kids that are in need. I cannot wait to pay it forward if or when we are able."

OUR VISION

That all children in Thunder Bay are able to participate in recreation activities, which boost their self-esteem and promote healthy growth through the learning of new skills, increased knowledge, and personal development.

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PRO Kids 2020 IMPACT

**DURING COVID-19
466 KIDS IN NEED
ACCESSED
RECREATION ...**

**162
LEARNED
GYMNASTICS**



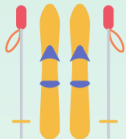
**22 LEARNED
TO SKATE**

**111 LEARNED
TO SWIM**



**25 LEARNED
MARTIAL
ARTS**

**20 LEARNED
TO SKI**



**25 LEARNED AN
INSTRUMENT**

**A TOTAL OF
\$121,420 IN
SPACES ACCESSED**



**A TOTAL OF
\$10,271 IN
EQUIPMENT
ACCESSED**

Dan's Kids on Ice

BY ALLY DROMBOLIS



This past December over \$8,000 was raised in support of PRO Kids by Dan's Kids on Ice, a fundraiser in memory of Dan Harding. The idea was inspired by Dan who would rent out an indoor arena annually as way for his children and their friends to gather and play hockey. The annual event marked its 17th year in 2019.

"Dan Harding was one of the most friendly, giant hearted, generous individuals you could imagine. He took a genuine interest in anything his children were interested in, but sports - hockey in particular- were his true passion. Dan believed that every kid deserved to have a chance to participate in sports if they wanted to, and was often a generous sponsor when it came to supporting children in their extracurricular endeavours", says Dan's daughter and co-organizer Natasha Harding.

PRO Kids would like to thank Dan's family for their generosity as well as those who donated in Dan's honour. Your support will help ensure that all children, regardless of their family's financial position, have equal access to recreation.

Award of Excellence in Access & Equity

BY ALLY DROMBOLIS

PRO Kids was the recipient of Parks and Recreation Ontario's Award of Excellence in Access and Equity 2020. The award recognizes organizations that champion and advocate for affordable access to recreation services for marginalized populations.

The PRO Kids concept was developed in the City's Recreation & Culture Division in 1998. It was acknowledged that financial barriers prevented low income children and youth from accessing recreational activities.



PRO Kids staff would like to thank its community activity partners and donors who have made it possible to place over 25,000 Thunder Bay children and youth into sports, music, and the arts in 23 years. We share this award with you!

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