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Learning & Playing with ROBOTICS

Saskatoon's Summer Fun program was jam packed with new activities, games and experiences for participants this summer. The seasonal program runs from July through August and provides children and youth experiencing disability with the opportunity to partake in enriching recreational activities; fostering inclusion while building their self-confidence, curiosity, and social skills.



With the increased interest in technology by younger age groups, Summer Fun coordinators jumped on the opportunity and facilitated an engaging day dedicated to robotics. With interest varying from coding and programming to steering robots off tables, all participants took something away from the experience.

"It was something new and exciting for participants to explore. Even if someone wasn't interested in learning the coding, they still had fun getting to see the robots do different things like spin in circles, zig-zag in a line or move backwards," explained Summer Fun Coordinator Leah Bissett.

Using engaging activities as learning opportunities for participants to expand their social skills or self-esteem is an essential part of the program. With initial interest in the robotics activity just in one group, Summer Fun co-ordinators saw the value in expanding access to the techy gadgets and made it available for two groups. "I would say all participants took something away or benefited in some way from their time playing with the robots. The participants creating coding sheets had a lot of fun and learned a lot," said Leah.

Other highlights from this year's Summer Fun program in Saskatoon included game shows, Shrek hide-and-seek, and laser tag. "Each group had an activity or game they really enjoyed doing and it was nice to see how participants enjoyed socializing from these activities," says Leah, mentioning the top picks for this season were painting, video games, board games and karaoke nights.

For more information on Summer Fun programming in Saskatoon, Regina, Swift Current or Yorkton visit our website saskabilities.ca.

SPLASH

 **SaskAbilities**
NEWSLETTER

Easter Seals
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SUMMER FUN and SLYP-Out summer sessions 2021



The participants and staff were very excited to come together during the week of July 5, 2021 to begin the Regina Branch 2021 youth summer programs. Twenty-three participants registered for this year's Summer Fun Program and 21 participants registered for the Social Leisure Youth Program (SLYP-Out) Summer Session. The Summer Fun participants are divided into three age groups – Our Time Sunshine (ages six to ten), Our Time Sunshine (ages 11 to 14) and Night Flight (ages 15 to 18). Each of these groups attends the program twice per week. The SLYP-Out participants attend once per week on either Monday or Wednesday evenings or Tuesday afternoons.

The Youth Facilitators, Breanna Glover, Emily Richards, Lucas Selinger and Shae Ignatiuk, planned an exciting program for the months of July and August. The activities offer the participants an opportunity to have fun, socialize, develop friendships, try new things and learn additional skills in many

outdoor and indoor settings. Some examples of the activities include yoga, paint night, outdoor movie and marshmallow roast, swimming, music, baking, cooking and fun with technology.

The participants displayed an abundance of enthusiasm and excitement about all of the program activities and the facilitators received many positive comments from parents and caregivers. The time flew by and everyone is looking forward to 2022!

The Regina Branch acknowledges and thanks the Community Initiatives Fund (CIF), Saskatchewan Lotteries, the City of Regina, the Government of Canada and Easter Seals Saskatchewan for their financial grants in support of the Summer Fun and SLYP-Out programs.

HELPING YOU BE, BELONG, BECOME (HUB) SUMMER CHALLENGE 2021

Everyone knows that getting outdoors is good for our mental and physical health, but did you know it is also good for our competitive spirit? That is what we were banking on in Regina this summer!

Our HUB program took on an Outdoor Challenge! Inspired by the 1000 Hours Outside Program (1000hoursoutside.com), participants from the Regina Branch challenged themselves to spend 200 hours outside in July and August. To help make this happen, staff met participants at various parks and other outdoor locations in Regina. Participants chose what activities they wanted to do and staff helped to make it happen. Activities included arts and crafts, walking for miles, taking excellent care of our community garden plot, a remote control car rally and photography activities.

When asked what they enjoyed the most about the Summer Challenge, the participants told the staff that they liked seeing people again, taking care of the garden, and eating the vegetables from the garden. They also enjoyed being outside because it helped them to get a better night's sleep!

The challenge was a great success and will continue into the fall.

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CAMP EASTER SEAL'S CAMP CONNECTED: Adapting and Succeeding

It was another unique year for Camp Easter Seal as Camp Manager Christine Epp and her team made the difficult decision to forgo in-person activities at Little Manitou Lake and continue Camp virtually for a second summer. Keeping the safety of campers, families, and staff in mind, it was the best decision given the impact and potential spread of COVID-19. This year however, Christine and her team were more prepared and created an exciting program full of dynamic and interactive experiences for campers that brought Camp to them, wherever they were.

Campers who registered for Camp Connected this year were organized into cabin groups with their own cabin name. These groups were smaller and organized by similar age and interests, which provided an opportunity for connection and bonding in a relaxed setting. There were also times when all campers were invited to engage together in activities. This was a unique opportunity for campers who wouldn't otherwise get to meet or spend time together. Long-time Camp Easter Seal camper Sydney Risler appreciated the larger social settings and activities. "I really liked being able to meet new people I haven't seen before. It's nice to see the friends I have met from past years at Camp but also new people. It just made camp really different and I liked it."

The 10 weeks of virtual camp were organized into exciting themes including 'Canadian Road Trip', 'It's a Pirate's Life', 'Passport to the World', 'Camp Lab Coat' and more! Campers could choose to attend the weeks and themes that most appealed to them, knowing bits and pieces of Camp would be woven into activities. "Every week we tried to include different elements of things campers would recognize or expect to make them feel like they were attending Camp. Those things could be traditions like songs we usually sing or even filming a particular piece or activity on location at Camp. We wanted them to feel like they were here with us, experiencing the same things they would if it were in person. We know it's not the same as being at Camp, but feedback has been really great from campers," says Camp Manager Christine.



While each week had a mix of educational content, sing-alongs, interactive games, and scavenger hunts there was one activity that topped the list for most campers. "The talent show has been such a huge hit. Campers have taken great pride in what they do, and they are so happy to share with us and their peers. It makes the whole group so happy, even those watching – you can see the joy on everyone's faces," says Camp Program Coordinator Kelly de Geest.

With camp wrapped up on August 19, Christine, Kelly and the team of four camp counselors are already reflecting on this summer. "I think compared to 2020, this year has been vastly different in a good way. We felt more prepared having used Zoom last year. I think our participants were more comfortable because they were more familiar with this virtual world. So, we have really learned and grown alongside campers these past two summers."

Looking ahead, Christine sees an opportunity to keep Camp Connected virtual activities and programming along with the hope of in-person Camp for 2022. "What that will look like and how much we will offer is still to be decided but it definitely meets a need and it will help mitigate some of the wait list we have each year."

To learn more about Camp Easter Seal and keep up to date with 2022 planning please visit camp.saskabilities.ca

Making a social splash in Swift Current

Fresh air and FUN were the goals of this year's summer programming at SaskAbilities Swift Current!

Summer Fun sessions were a combination of both in-person and virtual programs, to accommodate the needs and comfort levels of each participant. A total of 20 young people, ages 6-22, took part in this year's urban day camp.

SaskAbilities clients participated once again in golfing, visiting local courses like the Chinook Golf Course. The Summer Fun crew was even featured in a publication by Golf Saskatchewan as an inclusive initiative for the sport.

Program Senior Supervisor Kim Furey said with many activities on hold due to COVID-19, golf continues to be an outdoor, safe activity for clients to enjoy.

"We kind of jumped on the golf bandwagon this past year," Furey told Golf Saskatchewan.

"With everything that is going on being outdoors to do programming and have people connect is definitely the safest route to go. We were looking for different options and golf was one that came up and it was fabulous!"

In 2021, SaskAbilities Swift Current expanded Summer Fun programming to include things like employment skill-building classes, and activities that explored various parts of the region – including Treasure Valley, Saskatchewan Landing,



and the Goodwin House. SaskAbilities staff members have purposely offered a broad range of activities to reflect the likes and interests of clients, including more artistic-based sessions.

The opportunity to include many community groups has directly led to the success of the Summer Fun program.

"We are fortunate to partner with many organizations and local businesses that provide inclusive opportunities for individuals experiencing disability," commented Furey.

"Without them, and without the support of generous donors and sponsors for events like Walk, Wheel, Run, we would not be able to provide these experiences for young people in our region."

SaskAbilities Swift Current continues to plan new and innovative ways to explore southwest Saskatchewan, providing active, enjoyable, and educational experiences for participants. If you would like to get involved with Summer Fun, or its year-round counterpart SLYP-Out (Social Leisure Youth Program), SaskAbilities invites you to email swiftcurrent@saskabilities.ca.



Sun's Out... Smiles Out... SLYP-Out!

The sun and the smiles could not be contained during SLYP-Out activities in Yorkton this summer. The recreational program for youth and young adults ran both virtually and in person with activities ranging from online games like jeopardy and bingo to in-person adventures at the park and visiting horses. Yorkton SLYP-Out staff had some fun utilizing technology in some new ways with the Bitmoji virtual classrooms. This unique interactive platform provides safe activities and engagement with cartoon lookalike avatars and was a big hit with participants including 19-year-old Kaleb Krakalovich.

Kaleb is no stranger to SaskAbilities' summer activities, having attended Summer Fun previously. This is his fourth year in SLYP-Out. With a personality as big as his smile, Kaleb is known for his fun fashion sense (he loves hats) and being extremely helpful and caring. A social butterfly, Kaleb's absolute favourite thing about SLYP-Out is the ability to be social with other participants, "I like getting to hang out with all of my friends." While joking he likes to get into some good trouble here and there, Kaleb is often seen with his best friend Nick; the two have dubbed themselves 'The Bro-skis'.

Like most young adults, Kaleb is allergic to boredom and SLYP-Out has provided him with a way to engage and interact while still staying safe considering COVID-19. "He was getting pretty bored being at home. We like him to attend because we know



the staff are following proper protocols and cleaning. Kaleb was really excited to attend the virtual portion and then to be able to go out around the city. He loved all the activities and feeling a part of the group," expressed Kaleb's mom, Caroline.

Yorkton SLYP-Out coordinator Olivia Gordon knows the group is going to have a great time whenever Kaleb is around! "He's really just the sweetest and most helpful guy – always willing to lend a hand if someone needs it. Kaleb is also really open to trying new things. If we have an activity or game that is new, he's always up for the challenge, with a smile on his face!"

Having recently gone through open-heart surgery, Kaleb is healing so he can have all that energy back for more adventures. We know he can't wait to get back onto the golf course with his brother and hang out with his SLYP-Out crew!



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