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# THE POWER OF PLAY



Every week, program participants at the Swift Current Branch experience firsthand the power of play with dynamic movement, music therapy, and the healing arts. Counsellor and Expressive Arts Therapist Christine Ciona was first invited to the branch over 10 years ago to introduce drama therapy to a handful of program participants. Now a familiar face at the branch with her weekly sessions, Christine will once again share her love of expressive arts with the Summer Fun participants, bringing the power of play to children and youth in July and August.

"For the past five years, I've consistently supported clients at SaskAbilities in Swift Current through expressive arts involving movement, touch, sound, and play. Because we use all our senses to learn and each person is unique in their ability to engage the body and mind, I bring a whole collection of creative art tools for people to find their way to express themselves."  
- Christine Ciona, Counsellor & Healing Arts Therapist.

Integrating expressive arts into the Summer Fun curriculum made sense for program coordinators and was an easy "yes" for Christine. "Each group gets to spend an hour a week with me. The morning group is younger, elementary school-age children. With them, it's all about a dynamic creative play space for tapping into creative expression. Then, with the afternoon group, I'm working with teenagers, so there's more skill-building and development. With both groups, there are opportunities for dance, movement, rhythm, breathwork, centring, and play," explains Ciona, who quickly mentions she provides many options for participants that welcome a diverse range of motion and ability.

To learn more about Summer Fun programming at any of SaskAbilities' branches, visit [saskabilities.ca](http://saskabilities.ca).



# YORKTON BRANCH'S RIDER PRIDE ROAD TRIP



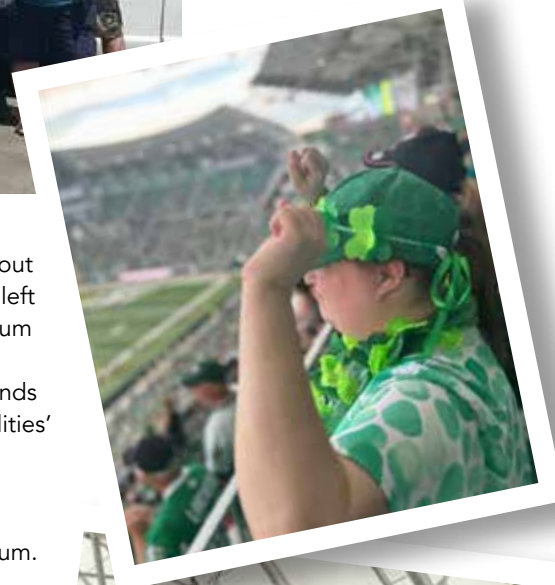
For nearly 10 years, Yorkton Minor Football has raised funds through its Gettin' in the Game program to send participants from SaskAbilities' Yorkton Branch on an annual road trip to watch the Saskatchewan Roughriders play on home turf.

"We are excited for warmer temperatures this year and to catch the home opener on Sunday. The most important thing is that the clients are having the best time, and that's what Gettin' in the Game is all about - giving people an experience they might not otherwise have. The Yorkton community has rallied to ensure this program continues with funds raised yearly through our annual event, Football Night in Saskatchewan." - Roby Sharpe, Yorkton Minor Football Association Member.

With over 30 program participants attending the game on June 23, the crew was a mix of avid Rider fans and first-time stadium attendees. "There were a handful of people who had never been, and they were excited to be able to attend this year. We prepped everyone in advance with stadium policies, from the clear bags to the no-re-entry rules. We also visited the Roughrider website to show roughly where we would be sitting so everyone knew what to expect. By game day, everyone was ready to go," shares Jamie Neal, Mental Health Senior Supervisor at the Yorkton Branch.

Of course, it wouldn't be a complete Roughrider home opener experience without some tailgating! The Yorkton Branch crew left well in advance, making it to Mosaic Stadium before the first kick-off to catch pre-game activities. The party continued into the stands as attendees cheered, seeing the SaskAbilities' logo flash on the stadium's big screen. "We did some dancing, singing, and shouting," admits program participant Stephanie of her first time at Mosaic Stadium.

The cherry on top? Cheering on the Roughriders as they took the win, 36 - 20, against the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. "There was electricity in the air," insists Kelly, a program participant and self-professed die-hard Roughrider fan, "I just hope this winning streak continues!"





# Teaming Up for Adaptive Sport

Canada's national sport reached program participants at SaskAbilities through a newly formed relationship with the Lacrossing Barriers team and the Quality of Life day program at the Saskatoon Branch. While Lacrossing Barriers' roots are firmly planted in British Columbia, the inclusive sports program has begun to spread its impact across western Canada, including Saskatchewan.

"Lacrossing Barriers is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing the opportunity to play sports, move, and learn skills to those in marginalized communities who haven't always been given the choice. Any sport or activity can be adaptive, and I think sometimes, as humans, we overthink things. This program is all about adaptation and inclusion. The goal is simple: let's give everyone who wants to play the opportunity to do just that." – Scott Godfrey, Director, Lacrossing Barriers.

Lacrossing Barriers' vision of creating a framework and network of sustainable and adapted sports for everyone, regardless of abilities, naturally intersects with SaskAbilities' vision, mission, and values. "With this partnership, lacrosse becomes the vehicle to create an inclusive and adaptive environment for folks who haven't been exposed to sports or given the opportunity to play. We hope Saskatoon is the launch pad for spreading this program to the other regions and across Saskatchewan," shares Vanessa Lizotte, Quality of Life day program mentor at SaskAbilities.

Starting in early March and running through until the end of June, day program participants from the Saskatoon Branch gathered each

week in the Blanchette Meeting Room, a former gymnasium at the Provincial Services building, to learn new skills and practice techniques related to lacrosse. While some participants were familiar with the sport, others were entirely new to lacross and were eager to practice and develop their skills. "I've never heard of or played lacrosse before, so I wanted to try it out. It's only my second week, but I think I'm getting better. Ask me again after a few more practices," laughs a 27-year-old participant from the Quality of Life program.

To learn more about the Lacrossing Barriers program at SaskAbilities, which begins again in September, please contact the Saskatoon Branch at [saskatoon@saskabilities.ca](mailto:saskatoon@saskabilities.ca).



## SaskAbilities, the Provincial Hub for National Program

SaskAbilities is the new provincial hub for MentorAbility, a national program that connects people experiencing disability with employers, entrepreneurs, and business leaders. The SaskAbilities Regina Branch leads the program, which has two dedicated coordinators, Samantha Luker and Carmen Donald, who happily connect mentees with mentors across the province.

"We are helping people get their foot into the door of the industry they want to work in. People can access this program anywhere on their job exploration path. Whether you are a youth trying to figure out your first steps or a

mature individual interested in getting back into the workforce, this program can help at different points and stages of the job search process for those individuals experiencing disability." – Samantha Luker, MentorAbility Coordinator.

While MentorAbility might be new to SaskAbilities, the program has roots across the country, including Saskatchewan. Coordinated by the Canada Association for Supported Employment (CASE), the program facilitates over 1,000 mentorships nationally while engaging over 400 employers in more than 200 communities from coast to coast.



"Accessing MentorAbility at any stage in the job development process helps solidify whether or not that job or career is the path individuals want to go down. We look for mentors who are the most passionate about what they do because those are the people who are excited about sharing their knowledge with someone seeking that knowledge." – Carmen Donald, MentorAbility Coordinator.

To learn more about MentorAbility and other supported employment programs, please visit [saskabilities.ca](http://saskabilities.ca).

# THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER AT CAMP EASTER SEAL

For decades, Camp Easter Seal has been known for providing a one-of-a-kind camping experience to hundreds of campers who flock to Little Manitou Lake each summer. What is far less known, however, is Camp Easter Seal's history of playing cupid! No one knows this better than Bailie Knowles, who met her now-husband, Spencer, during their memorable summers working at Camp.

"My aunt, who worked at Camp Easter Seal years before I did, met her late husband there and she told me there was something in the water out there. Sure enough, it wasn't just the salt she was talking about! My husband and I are also friends with six other couples who met at Camp and have since married," says Bailie Knowles.

Hired as a counsellor-in-training and working her way to a senior supervisor, Bailie was friends with many of her co-workers, including Spencer. Over time, the friendship grew to something more; the two began dating and, eventually, got engaged. Can you guess where their engagement photos were taken? You got it, Camp Easter Seal!



Reflecting on why Camp might be Saskatchewan's most unsuspecting matchmaking hub, manager Steve Grove believes it likely has nothing to do with all the minerals, salt, and shrimp in the lake water. "Part of the magic at Camp is that the whole team is working for something bigger than themselves, outside of their own needs, as they strive to help campers have the best week of their year. They bring energy, compassion, empathy, commitment, and sometimes great dance moves! As a result, new friendships develop, and it would be natural for some of those friendships to grow into something deeper."

The couple often finds themselves back at Little Manitou Lake with their four children, visiting Spencer's parents. "It feels like a full circle moment now. My husband and I will often take our kids through Camp and talk



about our summers working there. For us, Camp will forever live on in our family through memories, the friends we've made, and the many conversations we have with our kids," shares Bailie. She hopes their story is a source of inspiration, motivating and encouraging their children to work and create their own unforgettable experiences at Camp Easter Seal.

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