



CPRA ACPL

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Success Story

Dana Labelle with David Fremlin and his nephew at the first ever Roller Skate Night in Desbarats, ON

Elevating the level of recreation and special events for an engaged community

JOHNSON TOWNSHIP IN THE ALGOMA district in Northeastern Ontario is a small municipality with a big community spirit, and its recreational programs and special events attract people from a wide surrounding area.

The Hamlet of Desbarats, location of the Township's community centre and arena, is the hub of most of the activities. Many of the community events have been running for years and spark nostalgia.



CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP
OF JOHNSON, ONTARIO

Canada

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Dana Labelle with her Mum Frieda Labelle setting up for the first-ever Desbarats For Sale Community Yard Sale in May 2022



Setting up the course for the annual ATV Poker Run in Desbarats, ON

“...being able to host the position for a local youth is huge. There aren’t many jobs available here, and this is a quality work opportunity that helps build transferrable skills they can use in future jobs.”

Patti Trotter, Recreation Coordinator of Johnson Township, as well as the town of Bruce Mines

“We service a large area, and a lot of people come from Sault Ste. Marie (60 kilometres away) where they moved after growing up in Desbarats. They are connected to the history of events they’ve attended since they were kids, and now they’re bringing their kids,” says Patti Trotter, Recreation Coordinator of Johnson Township, as well as the town of Bruce Mines.

Patti has significant responsibilities, and in 2022, she was given much-needed support when Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) provided funding for the hiring of an Events and Recreation Assistant through its Youth Employment Experience program. The program, funded by the Government of Canada, is designed to provide young people with experience in the parks and recreation sector, to build their skills, and to help organizations in the sector boost their capacity.

“Having the ability to hire a young person for this position helps tremendously, allowing us to have more and larger events,” says Patti. “And being able to host the position for a local youth is huge. There aren’t many jobs available here, and this is a quality work opportunity that helps build transferrable skills they can use in future jobs.”

Eighteen-year-old Dana Labelle was enthusiastic about applying for the position. “I’ve lived in Desbarats all my life,” she says. “I love being involved in the community and have volunteered a lot. I enjoy planning events and seeing everything come together in the end with a successful result.”

Dana says she was able to acquire new skills in the role including in project management, team coordination and graphic design. She helped organize many of the traditional events that always draw large crowds, such as Community Days and the ever-popular outdoor-themed annual events including the Reg McHale Memorial Big Pike Family Fishing Derby, the ATV Poker Run and for hunters, the Big Buck Contest.

What really stands out for her, she says, is the success the team achieved with Roller Skate Night, held in late August on the rink of the Johnson Township Community Centre. “This was a new event, something that had never been done here before,” she says. “When we first mentioned the event on Facebook, the reaction was through the roof. We installed laser lights over the rink and had a great crowd, with a lot of people coming from Sault Ste. Marie to join the fun.” Roller Skate Night was so popular that the Township organized another one soon after.

Patti says the CPRA support to hire Dana added a great deal of value for the organization. “I’m not from this area, and it was great to have a local young person who is familiar with the history of events here. Dana brought new ideas, a fresh perspective and a lot of community connections that allowed our team to raise the level of our community events.” 🍁