



Mentorship to help youth develop life and professional skills

THE SOUTH ARM COMMUNITY

Association, in collaboration with the City of Richmond, BC, delivers recreation and wellness services to people from the area and beyond, with many of its programs operating out of the South Arm Community Centre. While people of all ages are served by its recreational and social programming, one of the association's priorities is youth development – both through diverse, youth-focused programs and through its youth development leader mentorship initiative.



SOUTH ARM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION,
RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canada

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Justin de Graauw, Youth Development Coordinator

Youth Development Coordinator Justin de Graauw leads the initiative, which aims to help youth develop overall life skills, as well as professional skills for careers in recreational programming and elsewhere.

The South Arm Community Association was able to bolster its resources in the summer of 2022 when it received funding from the CPRA Youth Employment Experience program to hire and mentor a young woman as a Youth Development Leader. The 18-year-old woman had just graduated from high school and this was her first foray into youth recreational programming. (The woman has requested anonymity.)

The CPRA program aligns well with the South Arm Community Association’s youth-development focus, as it is also designed to give youth opportunities to gain work experience and develop skills in parks and recreation.

“We saw that she had the capability to lead a wide range of program offerings, and we called on her to assume a leadership role within the programming,” he explains.

“She was a rock star throughout the process – whatever we needed her to do, she stepped up. She did very well working with the youth in our camps, some of them not much younger than she was.”

One centrepiece of the summer programming is Youth Adventure Camp, a day camp designed to get youth out of

the centre and into the community. “The goal is to open the door to new experiences and allow them to explore outdoor activities beyond what they typically may do with their families and friends,” says Justin.

These outdoor-based day camps run every second week in the summer and feature adventure trips for groups of up to 16 youth from ages 11 to 16. The activities range from mini-golf and bike tours to kayaking.

Justin says he appreciated the CPRA program’s mentorship package, which included information and tools to help senior staff in their roles as mentors. “It strengthened my mentorship, and I saw so much growth within her over the course of the summer. You could see how her confidence increased, along with her skills for communication and leading larger groups.”

The young woman expressed interest in continuing to work with the South Arm Community Association on a part-time basis while attending university, as her schedule permitted, Justin says.

“She brought a lot of value to our organization and the youth in our community, and we are pleased that we were able to help her develop skills and confidence that we believe will help her in a variety of professional roles.” 🍁