



CPRA ACPL

REACHING EACH AND EVERY ONE

Success Story

While attending adapted gymnastics, this participant loved using trampolines. After a class, her mother came up to let the coaches know that this was the first time in her life that she had jumped with both feet at the same time.

Glenmore Adaptive Gymnastics Club creates space for people with disabilities

CATHERINE BUTT-VALLIÈRES BEAMS AS she thinks about the gymnasts who have participated in the Glenmore Adaptive Gymnastics Club's InGym training program.

For these youth and adults who have intellectual and physical disabilities, this program gave them the opportunity to learn gymnastics – and made lasting impacts on them both mentally and physically.



GLENMORE ADAPTIVE GYMNASTICS CLUB,
ALBERTA

Canada

This project is funded by
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Learning to connect with participants and finding the best ways to communicate with them is crucial to the success of our adapted gymnastics program. We strive to create a safe, inclusive, accommodating, and fun space within our gym for every single one of our participants.

“They are getting stronger and more confident, and more aware of how to use their body within a space and what their body can do,” explains Butt-Vallières, the adaptive gymnastics team lead for the club. “We’re even seeing the benefits in other aspects of their life. I’ve heard so many lovely stories from parents and caregivers about how much this program has meant to them.”

Starting in January 2023, the gymnastics club grew its classes for children and adults with disabilities – including people with Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and physical disabilities. Butt-Vallières says the funding helped support advertising for the program, purchasing adaptive gear for participants, and providing coaches with training opportunities.

Butt-Vallières was able to deliver this incredible program to children and adults in the Glenmore community thanks to funding from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association’s Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention program. This program, which was funded by Sport Canada’s Community Sport for All Initiative, seeks to remove barriers and increase sport participation rates for equity deserving groups across Canada.

She says this support helped break down barriers people with disabilities face when accessing gymnastics.

“Gymnastics specifically as a sport is still kind of an old-fashioned sport. There’s a huge focus on outcome. For example, if someone is doing a handstand, they have to do it a certain way within the criteria. If they don’t do it that way, it’s not a handstand,” Butt-Vallières explains. “That’s challenging for a lot of these participants, because not



When this participant started adapted gymnastics, she was fearful of trying new things and didn’t want to walk along the beam without holding someone’s hand. After a few weeks in the program, the participant was eager to show off that she could walk all on her own!

everyone can do a handstand. This program recognized that different groups have different needs.”

She adds that the program also offered alternative ways to do gymnastics for participants with assistive devices, like ankle-foot orthosis.

“We helped find ways for them to participate, and feel successful and accepted,” Butt-Vallières says. “It was about very intentionally creating a space for them, and within that space, they were supported with what we were able to offer.”

The program also offered adaptive equipment – such as weighted blankets and noise cancelling headphones – to help participants practice gymnastics in a comfortable, safe, and healthy environment.

Additionally, she says the athletes participate in the gym at the same time as everybody else – helping raise awareness of the program to other athletes and coaches who were using the gym.

“It’s a great teaching opportunity to talk about disability, and how some people have different needs that need to be met,” she says.

Butt-Vallières calls the program her “passion project,” and says the funding has helped it grow into a popular program for children with disabilities.

“I very much appreciate how accepting the community has been towards this program,” she says, adding that parents often come to her with new ideas for the program. “When I started this, I wanted to build it with the community – not just for the community. This funding has allowed us to be a part of the community, and it has meant the world to us.” 🍁