



Western Valley P.R.O Kids connects youth with sport opportunities

A NEW BRUNSWICK PARENT HAD TEARS, in her eyes when she found out her three children — ages six, five and three — could participate in swimming lessons.

She wasn't working, and money was tight. She was connected to this sport opportunity for her children through Western Valley P.R.O Kids — a New Brunswick-based organization that helps as many children and youth as possible, who, due to lack of funds, are unable to participate in sport, art, recreational or cultural activities.



WESTERN VALLEY P.R.O KIDS,
NEW BRUNSWICK

Canada

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Kent Kuhn, a Western Valley P.R.O Kids board member

The organization relies on funding sources to deliver this service to New Brunswick youth, and in 2023, it got a boost 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.

“I truly appreciate the help, and am glad to know to know there is something locally to support people in tough times,” this mother says.

Kent Kuhn, a Western Valley P.R.O Kids board member, says the organization serves youth ages three to 18 years across western New Brunswick from Nackawic, up to around Mount Carleton.

“We have put kids in activities such as tennis, soccer, dance camps, drama camps, and swimming lessons,” Kuhn explains. “We rely on funding to provide financial support for these kids to participate.”

This funding, including from Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention, helps these young people overcome barriers they face when accessing sport and recreation programs.

Kuhn says one of these barriers is financial. The program almost entirely covers the cost of registration for the child, while the parent only has to pay a small amount out-of-pocket. Depending on the program, Kuhn says this amount can range from \$5 to \$50.

“The reason we do that is we want a commitment from the parents,” he explains, adding that the parents’ small fee means their child can participate in sports that can be more costly. “Everybody thinks hockey is the most expensive, and it is one, but there’s also gymnastics and dance that can get expensive.”

Kuhn adds that transportation is also a barrier for many of the families the organization serves. Some of them live in rural communities, and need to access activities that are further away. He says that Western Valley P.R.O Kids offers these families travel supports that help participants overcome barriers to transportation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also created lasting effects on New Brunswick families, and has impacted the organization. As it created an unstable job market, Kuhn says the organization is seeing many more families access its services.

“Because of COVID, parents have been laid off,” he says. “It has put a financial strain on a lot of people, and has brought in families that you would not think would be P.R.O Kids recipients,” he says.

Overall, Kuhn says the funding helped the organization continue its mission and alleviated a lot of financial pressure. In 2023, he says Western Valley P.R.O Kids didn’t have to ask families to pay more out-of-pocket – which is something they never want to have to do.

“We get letters from the kids saying thank you, and how they enjoyed participating in a sport and made new friends,” he says. “For them it’s not about the sport itself, but the socializing with other kids.” 🍁