



CPRA ACPL

REACHING EACH AND EVERY ONE

# Success Story

Chantal holding pad for seated boxer.

## Boxing Without Barriers delivers ASL boxing to Ottawa community

**S**IMONE EDWARDS-FORDE LOVES TO TRY new things. Unfortunately, she's not always able to.

The Ottawa resident, who is Deaf and communicates through American Sign Language (ASL), needs an interpreter any time she wants to participate in an activity — whether it's a pottery class, or a basketball or exercise program. But these programs don't always have the funding to include an ASL interpreter, which prevents Simone from participating.



BOXING WITHOUT BARRIERS,  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO

**Canada**

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Chantal Deketele, director and head coach of Boxing Without Barriers.

In 2023, that all changed when she discovered Boxing Without Barriers, which was providing culturally responsive programming in ASL for Deaf athletes - specifically Deaf girls and women — in the Ottawa area.

The organization was able to deliver this incredible program, 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.

"I felt this huge sense of relief that it wasn't incumbent upon me now to go looking for an interpreter to try to find access to programming. It was just there and ready to go," says Simone.

Boxing Without Barriers is an Ottawa-based organization that is a non-contact boxing program for children, youth, and adults with physical, cognitive, or developmental disabilities. Classes are open to individuals with a wide range of abilities, and is designed for participants to exercise, learn to box, and have fun. Also, she feels boxing helped with her mental and physical health.

"Boxing is great benefit for me, and for anyone!" she says.

Chantal Deketele, director and head coach of Boxing Without Barriers, says the organization has been expanding to more groups, including people who are Deaf.

"There's not a lot of accessible sport in our community for Deaf people, where they can access it in their preferred communication methods," Deketele says.



Simone Edwards-Forde was excited to learn how to use boxing in Ottawa, Ontario.

She adds that the funding helped cover registration costs for participants, and helped the organization purchase equipment to help deliver the programming, such as boxing gloves.

Through the funding, Boxing Without Barriers partnered with Beaver Boxing Club and were able to use the club's facilities to deliver the program. It also helped cover some of the coach training needed to work with the Deaf community.

"I was really happy that the CPRA was interested in funding a project like this," Deketele says. "This support for accessible sport in Ottawa was really nice."

She adds that the funding helped make boxing more accessible to girls and women, people with disabilities, and people who communicate in different languages.

"Boxing has had a pretty white bread demographic for a really long time," Deketele says. "I'm glad that opportunities are starting to come along to shift that."

Simone says this opportunity has helped her discover a love for boxing, and she wants to continue participating in the sport.

She adds that her participation has proven that boxing can be for anyone.

"It's been a great opportunity for me to feel connected," she says. "I feel that it's great for me, as a Black Deaf person, to be able to show people that I can do this. It's great role modelling – I can show that boxing isn't just for hearing people. It's not just for people who all look the same. It's also great for the community at large, to represent to the community that people of colour and people who have diverse backgrounds are involved in sport." 🍁