



CPRA ACPL

REACHING EACH AND EVERY ONE

Success Story

CAPTivate Gymnastics' modest program is for girls and women from modest communities to practice gymnastics in an all-female environment, where hair coverings, skirts and long sleeves are normalized. It's an opportunity for girls and women to be playful, get stronger, and meet girls/women from other religious backgrounds, while enjoying the sport of gymnastics!

Alberta gymnastics program creates connections between communities

AT A GYMNASTICS CLUB IN CALGARY, girls from Orthodox Jewish and Muslim families encouraged each other as they took turns crossing a balance beam. Together, they practiced somersaults, cartwheels, and flips. They also built connections with one another – bonding over their shared love of gymnastics.

In 2023, these girls are all participated in CAPTivate Gymnastics' CAPTivate Kosher/Hayaa Gymnastics for Girls and Women – which allowed them to freely practice gymnastics in a safe and welcoming space among other girls. This program was made possible thanks to funding from



CAPTIVATE GYMNASTICS SUBSIDIARY ASSOCIATION, ALBERTA

Canada

This project is funded by the Government of Canada

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Hayley Silberg, founder of CAPTivate Gymnastics

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.

CAPTivate Gymnastics is an adult gymnastics club that rents space from 12 different gyms across Alberta – including in Calgary, Edmonton, and Canmore. Hayley Silberg, founder of CAPTivate Gymnastics, wanted to offer the program after speaking with women in the Jewish community.

“I happen to be Jewish, and I am friendly with some of the more observant ladies in the Jewish community who were asking if it was possible to arrange an all-female gymnastics program for their daughters,” Silberg explains. “Their girls really wanted to do gymnastics, but because they train in skirts and long-sleeved shirts, and they can’t go upside down with men around, there was no program that existed for them.”

She adds that one of the club’s coaches, Mahnoor Sultan, was also able to bring in girls from the Muslim community who needed a space where they could also practice gymnastics with other girls.

The funding allowed Silberg to run the program for girls – as well as many of their mothers who wanted to try gymnastics. It also covered the cost of renting out a private gymnastics facility, as well as most of their registration costs.

The gymnastics facility helped participants overcome barriers to accessing all-female sport environments, Silberg says.

“A lot of these families who are from these modest backgrounds are looking for an all-female environment,” she says, adding that many of these families also face financial barriers to accessing sports and recreation opportunities.

“Some of these families have four daughters, so for them to pay a regular price for all four daughters would be very expensive for them.”

The funding also covered the cost of female coaches – including Sultan, who is Muslim herself – which gave the athletes a positive role model in sport.

“It’s really special for the kids to see a Muslim coach demonstrating cartwheels and handstands with her hair covered,” Silberg says, adding that many of the younger gymnasts participated with their older sisters, and knew that their mothers were in the adult program. “It’s amazing role modelling for lifelong fitness.”

While the program helped these female gymnasts overcome the barriers they face to sport, Silberg says it also helped break down barriers among the Orthodox Jewish and Muslim communities.

“Both of these communities are pretty insular, and they go to Muslim school or Jewish school, and they don’t meet people from the other community,” she explains. “For the young girls, I am so curious how far this will go in their lives. I wonder what kind of tolerance and understanding is going to come from this, but manifesting later in life?”

Without the funding support, Silberg says this program would have been a “fraction” of the size. She adds that the opportunity made major impacts on the 24 girls, and six women, who participated.

“This funding opened up a world of fitness to little girls that probably have never done any kind of structured sport in their lives,” she says. “This funding also helped build bridges between these two communities that don’t interact with each other often. I don’t think the bridges are obvious yet. But I think that when these girls are adults, they will look back on this gymnastics program and it could be literally life changing.” 🍁