



## OCH Foundation rebuilds recLINK program in Ottawa Community Housing communities

**C**HILDREN LIVING IN OTTAWA  
Community Housing (OCH) face many barriers in life, including access to sport and recreation programs in the community.

For many, their families can't afford the registration fees. They also might face obstacles when it comes to transportation, or language barriers.



OTTAWA COMMUNITY HOUSING (OCH)  
FOUNDATION, ONTARIO

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Traci Spour-Lafrance, the OCH Foundation’s acting Executive Director

But in the spring and summer of 2023, children in Ottawa were able to overcome these obstacles and get connected to their favourite sport and recreation activities, 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.

The funding supported the OCH Foundation’s recLINK program, which breaks down barriers to equitable participation in recreation for children and families living in OCH neighbourhoods. The program helps families navigate the recreation registration and subsidy systems, and link children and youth to programs that meet their needs and interests.

“We work with the family to identify the child’s interests,” explains Traci Spour-Lafrance, the OCH Foundation’s acting Executive Director. “From there, we find a program close by to their home to ensure transportation is possible. The recLINK program covers the cost of registration and ensures the child has all the necessary equipment.”

Spour-Lafrance says the funding helped rebuild the foundation’s recLINK program after the COVID-19 pandemic closed local organizations that it partnered with – making it difficult for children to access sport and recreation opportunities post-pandemic.

She adds that the recLINK team was finally able to have a presence in OCH communities, run events, get to know the community members, and work with communities to identify families that would benefit from long-term recLINK programming.

These events included onsite programming such as Pop-in and Play initiatives in OCH neighbourhoods. “The pop-ins were a great way for people in the community to get to know us the OCH Foundation team, and more specifically the recLINK program. The ultimate goal is to follow-up with the families and provide ongoing support,” she says.

Lindsey Ziebell, Senior Program Coordinator from the OCH Foundation, says that one of the more significant barriers for tenants is the registration process.

“Everything’s done through the computer to sign up, when it might be 9 p.m. on a Monday night to get a kid into swimming,” Ziebell explains. “Families are expected to have access to a computer, to be logged on at that time when their children are home, all while they’re trying to balance everything they have going on, and they trying to get their kid into swimming. It’s stopping so many kids from registering.”

Ziebell says that the recLINK program removes those barriers - allowing the recLINK team to make the directly connection to the sport or recreation program for the family.

“What we do successfully is get kids into programs who wouldn’t be in programs at all,” she says.

Overall, Spour-Lafrance says the funding opportunity helped raise awareness of this important program that’s available to OCH residents – helping make great impacts on children and youth through sport and recreation opportunities.

“The funding got us back on track, and really pushed us forward to where we want to be in the future,” she says.

To learn more about the Ottawa Community Housing Foundation, visit: [www.ochfoundation.ca](http://www.ochfoundation.ca) 