



NEWS RELEASE

New Options for Children with Special Needs in Kemptville Area

- Successful Launch of Sport Night series for children with Special Needs Will Run Again in New Year -

KEMPTVILLE, ON January 7 2010 – EQUIFITT .COM Fitness and Sport Conditioning today announced the re-launch for 2010 of the first series of an all new sport and socialization option for parents with children with special needs in Kemptville. The course was run as a test in November and December 2009.

Participating families celebrated the end of the first series of sports and activity evenings with a visit from Santa at the Kemptville Bowling Lanes.

Sport Night began as the initiative of a Kemptville family who have a child with Autism. Due to the expense and time involved in transporting children with special needs to Ottawa for accessible programs, Patricia Flanagan spear-headed the start of a program for children with special needs right here in Kemptville. The series started in November and wrapped up this past week for the year. It was a great success, and will be run again in January.

Flanagan approached Equifitt.com Fitness & Sport Conditioning to provide leadership in physical education as well as Autism Ontario's – Realize Community Potential Program to partner with the community and help launch the program.

Sport Night is sponsored by Equifitt.com Fitness and Sport Conditioning through a discounted rate, the Kemptville Pentecostal Tabernacle who generously provides space and use of floor hockey equipment for the group, and the Realize Community Potential Program (RCP) who helped launch the activity. RCP's participation was limited to the launch initiative, however Sport Night will continue in January 2010, thanks to a proposed new partnership with North Grenville Community Living.

"The Sport Night is a real community program." said Heather Sansom, EQUIFITT owner. "When Patricia initially called me to ask if I did fitness for kids, my answer was basically 'well no, there's so much going on for kids in Kemptville'. Then she told me about her son, who has Autism, and the challenges that parents have in finding programs which meet their children's needs. Most of these programs are in Ottawa.

What began as a dream by one parent looking for a way to provide needed services in the area for their child, has become a reality for all the families involved. It has been my great privilege to be invited to provide leadership in sport skills training in this framework. The parents have been involved 100% since the beginning when we asked them for their goals for such a program. Autism Ontario's Realize Community Potential Program also helped with direction on the life skills and other expectations and goals for a group such as this. The Pentecostal Church has been very accommodating and generous with donating use of their activity space.

For more information, contact: Heather Sansom, owner
(613) 258-4866 personaltraining@equifitt.com
Kemptville, Ontario



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When you start a program like this, you start to realize how much goes into it, from fitness equipment, to insurance for the volunteers. We have also been blessed with very committed volunteers. With a group of kids, with special needs, it's important to have a much higher adult/child ratio. With parent, family and volunteer participation, we have been able to maintain an almost 1.5/1 adult/child ratio. What this means for the kids is that we really have been able to help each individual child learn sport and socialization skills at a pace and in ways which made the experience accessible, and successful for each child."

Commenting on just why such a group is important in Kemptville, Patricia said "In order to receive specialized extra curricular activities / groups for my son, I have to drive into Ottawa. This is very inconvenient not only for me but also other families in our community. I am a strong advocate for integration, however, there are times when considerations need to be made. Kids with special needs and neuro-typical (NT) kids (your average kid) are not on the same playing field. When they are young this is not a big deal. However, as they get older and more competitive this can become an issue and it is not fair to either group. Kids with special needs require more hands on, patience, etc. They may need more directions and encouragement. They may be socially and/or physically behind their NT peers."

A parent from the group shares some of her 10-year old son's experiences: "He loves the "idea" of playing organized sports and being on a team. He wants to be accepted by his peers. He wants to have true friends and he wants to fit in. He looks no different than his peers and his dreams are very similar. He enjoys the same things as his peers. My son has Autism. Therefore, his wants and dreams are much more difficult for him to achieve. Playing sports with his NT peers is very difficult for him. The concepts escape him, he cannot keep up to them, and the sensory overload can overwhelm him. The fact that he does not have the same level of skill frustrates and embarrasses him. The NT children become frustrated with him and his struggles. The fun eventually disappears, leaving me with a depressed young man who feels he is a "loser" and not good enough. I am left with my own broken heart, trying to pick up the pieces of my son's broken heart with a reassuring smile on my face. "

"He wants at least one real friend. Someone who will accept him, play basketball with him at recess, and listen to his ideas. He does not know how to approach the other kids and he's terrified of their possible rejection. My son needs a group where he can learn sport skills and make friends in his own community. A group where he belongs, feels able to participate on an equal level, and has his self-esteem bolstered. "

"I'm very excited that the program will continue in the New Year." said Heather. "The goals of the program are very much in line with the mission statement of Community Living which is that '*all persons live in a state of dignity, share in all elements of living in the community, and have the opportunity to participate effectively.*' We really see these kids grow and shine. They are being physically active, laughing, making new friends, and learning skills they don't even realize they are learning about thriving in life."

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The Kemptville Sport Night for Kids with Special Needs is held on Tuesdays from 6:30-7:30pm, and is open to children with any special need. Fees are kept affordable at approximately \$80 for 8 weeks. The registration process includes a parent interview to ensure that children of similar ability and age are grouped together. Registration depends on spots available. For more information, to register your child, or to volunteer contact Patricia Flanagan at pflan@xplornet.com (613) 724-1843, or Heather Sansom at personaltraining@equifitt.com (613) 258-4866 .

About EQUIFITT.com Fitness & Sport Conditioning: based in Kemptville, ON offers in-home personal training, and fitness bootcamps and classes. Equifitt provides phys-ed instruction to the Montessori school in Kemptville, and is also an internationally recognized specialist in fitness conditioning for equestrian athletes.

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