

Kids and Families

SMART Camp makes learning fun again

By Basil Botetzayas
Town Crier

Kids are getting smarter without even knowing it. In its ninth year of existence in the North Toronto and Leaside areas SMART Camp has added two new venues at Leaside High School and Lawrence Park Collegiate to accommodate more children.

Collin Strange conceived SMART camps' format while he was teaching Grade 3 at Blythwood Public School. Strange, a math and phys ed. teacher uses games and sports to teach the children math.

"I had a parent tell me she loved it because we were slipping education in through the side door," Strange said. "We don't test, we let them learn at their own rate. Some people are concrete hands on learners and this is great for them."

Strange created SMART, which stands for sports, math and recreational training to incorporate the math curriculum with more useful time in the gym and also get the kids interested. One game that is very popular with the kids is scooter gauntlet. In the game of scooter gauntlet one team of kids is on the scooters and has to make it across the gym. The other team is lined up on the sideline rolling balls at the scooters. If the kids on the scooters travel the length of the gym without being touched by a ball, then they have the opportunity of answering a math question. If they are correct, they have immunity and can scoot back without worrying about the balls rolling at them.

"We try to make everything

progressive so that we can use it from younger to older," Strange said "If you look at the cards with the questions on them there are different difficulty levels so a kid can choose more challenging questions."

The camp operates with three main areas that keep the children occupied and attentive. Games are played in the gym and out on the fields with the arts and crafts taught in a classroom.

"One thing that parents love is our average age of 21 for our counsellors," Strange added "We have eight counsellors that are either teachers or enrolled in teachers college."

The other two locations of the camp, Blythwood and Hodgson will be running for the six weeks of the summer while Leaside and Lawrence Park aren't available past the first two weeks due to the World Youth Day celebrations.

"The first year I was a little discouraged because we only had 38 kids total. The next year we had 105 and this year we expect 500 through the six weeks," Strange said "As a teacher I like to get it right first as opposed to expanding for the sake of expansion."

The camp is capped off by the Gym-Math-Tics competition in which the gears are switched from co-operative games to semi-competitive games to some competitive games.

"We don't stress the winners, rather what each group did well in. Everyone gets a medal at the end whether it's gold, silver or bronze," Strange said.

Strange would like to eventually take the camp in to the inner city as well as expand it to an After-4 program during the school year.

"It's one of the most cost effective private camps around. We have had a lot of school board officials supportive of the program," Strange said "It's just getting harder to get the permits, the permits people have been great but the board might have to make decisions based on funding."

Outside of the registration fees, the camp counts on Originals on Bayview Ave. to supply much needed sponsorship. For more information on SMART Camp visit their web-site at www.smartcamp.org e-mail Collin Strange at smartcamps@hotmail.com. ♦



SMART Camps are slipping education in through the side door teaching math through sports and games.

Rescue pets in cyberspace

500,000 pets were adopted last year through Petfinder.com

By Andrew Matte
Town Crier

If you can buy groceries, sex and even human organs online, then it's not that big a stretch that you can find your next family pet online too.

Thanks to a North America-wide Web site, pet owner wannabes can type in their zip and postal codes and a number of online humane societies and foster care shelters will pop up, giving the surfer and number of options to choose from.

A virtual animal shelter to beat them all.

The site just got bigger thanks to the addition of a number of Toronto locations who've jumped on board. They are Action Volunteers for Animals, Toronto West in Mississauga, Etobicoke Humane Society; Action Volunteers for Animals, Toronto Central; Action Volunteers for Animals, Toronto East in Pickering and Paws to Love Animal Rescue in Thornhill are among nearly 100 locations in Canada to submit their services.

The mandate of the site, which is paid for through advertising from dog food companies and the like, is to allow people to find pets easy, to find them nearby and to also let someone looking for a specific kind of pet to search for it online, wherever it might be.

The site has close to 80,000 pets from 3,800 shelters ready

for adoption at any one time.

Potential adopters can search beyond their local areas and generate a list of pets based on their proximity to where they live. Up pops a picture of a dog or cat and the user is one click away from getting information about where the pet is and how to adopt it.

Petfinder.com says it helped more than 500,000 adoptions take place last year across North America.

"Our adoptions have gone through the roof," says Darlene Quensey, vice-president of the Quinite Humane Society in Belleville.

Quensey was approached by PetFinder last year when it wanted to expand the number of organizations that were linked

to its site.

Quensey said becoming involved in the site was an easy decision to make since it was free, and gave many more people access to its own site.

"It really has been a good thing all around — we get people coming from out of town all the time," she said.

Kim Galdding, the dog adoption co-ordinator at the Etobicoke Human Society, is also pleased with the response of the site.

They learned about the site when they went online looking for a dog — someone came to them but they didn't have the type of dog they were looking for.

"It's just a fabulous service," she said. ♦

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