

MEDIA RELEASE

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WEST SHORE PARKS AND RECREATION WINS BCRPA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Wild About Wellness Program honoured with Program Excellence Award

Kelowna, BC (Thursday, April 6th, 2017) - West Shore Parks and Recreation has won a provincial Award of Excellence (for populations more than 15,000) from the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). The Program Excellence Award has been presented to the *Wild About Wellness* Program. This award recognizes a creative, successful and innovative program which may serve as a model for other recreation and parks agencies to enhance their services.

The *Wild About Wellness* program was developed when West Shore Parks and Recreation staff identified a dramatic increase in anxiety and mental health issues among youth in the West Shore and Sooke communities. Waitlists for community support programs were lengthy and, as a result, only youth in crisis were being serviced. Given the documented benefits physical activity has in reducing anxiety and depression, the program aimed to combine these benefits with a therapeutic group process. The free program was created using a youth-centred approach which allowed clients to identify the activities and topics most relevant to them. The program was noted for its many positive attributes: partnership model, creativity, responsiveness, low overhead cost and especially impact on the program participants.

“The *Wild About Wellness* program hits the mark for being low cost, preventative, youth-centred and successful. It is deserving of this recognition as it is easy to emulate province-wide and communities can quickly see the benefits of counteracting mental health issues with physical activity and positive group support programs,” said BCRPA CEO, Rebecca Tunnacliffe.

The BCRPA Provincial Award for Program Excellence is one of four provincial awards presented at the BCRPA’s annual Symposium today in Kelowna. The conference brings together members of the recreation and parks sector from across BC, including elected officials, volunteers, members of the business community and others interested in building and sustaining active, healthy lifestyles and communities in BC.

BACKGROUND:

The British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association is a not for profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active healthy lifestyles and communities in BC. Established in 1958, the Association is a central resource agency for members and stakeholders of the recreation, parks, physical activity and culture sector, providing leadership, training and support to help meet national, provincial and local priorities. Through a diverse network of partners and extensive programs and services, BCRPA actively advocates accessibility and inclusiveness to recreation and physical activity.

<http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/>

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