

Le succès de bonspiels de bienfaisance, comme celui de Bob Villeneuve a été remarqué par les administrateurs d'autres groupes de bienfaisance. La Fondation du diabète juvénile Canada (FDJC) organise un événement de grande envergure appelé JDF JetForm Technospiel qui s'adresse aux joueurs et aux entreprises du secteur de haute technologie en pleine croissance d'Ottawa. «Un grand nombre d'entreprises comptent des ligues ou des équipes de curling qui concourent pendant l'hiver et, ainsi, le curling devient de plus en plus populaires chez ces personnes», déclare Pamela Mason, gestionnaire du Financement et du développement de FDJC.

<<Lorsqu'on donne le chèque (à l'association de bienfaisance), c'est formidable de savoir qu'on consacre un peu de son énergie à aider des gens qui sont peut-être moins chanceux que nous.>>

—Bob Villeneuve
Ottawa, Ontario

Organisé par l'Ottawa Hunt and Country Club, le Technospiel a commencé l'hiver dernier et attiré vingt-quatre équipes et trente entreprises commanditaires, dont JetForm, le commanditaire principal, ainsi que les principaux commanditaires Nortel, JDS Uniphase, Calian Technologies, Hewson, Bridge & Smith Advertising, Eftia, et OSS Solutions. Avec son slogan s'inspirant du curling A cure is just a stone's throw away (La guérison se trouve à un jet de pierre), l'événement a permis de recueillir 22 500 \$ pour la recherche sur le diabète juvénile, une somme que la FDJC considère comme un énorme succès dans le cadre d'un événement organisé pour la première fois. La prévision était de 20 000 \$.

Mme Mason est persuadée que le prochain Technospiel sera de plus grande envergure et remportera plus de succès que le premier. «Nous nous attendons à recueillir encore plus que l'an dernier – une somme nette de 30 000 à 35 000 \$ environ», soutient-elle. «Nous avons sollicité la participation des curleurs de l'an dernier et comptons déjà un tiers des trente-six équipes engagées à jouer et n'avons même pas encore commencé à faire de la publicité.»

Les droits d'inscription au prochain Technospiel sont de 500 \$. À l'instar de l'événement inaugural, le versement des droits garantit aux joueurs au moins trois matchs – et plus si l'équipe se qualifie pour la ronde éliminatoire – un spectacle, un dîner et une chance de gagner des prix donnés par les commanditaires. Le spectacle du banquet de remise des prix de l'an dernier a mis en vedette Gord Paynter, un comédien d'Ottawa qui a perdu la vue à l'âge de 21 ans à cause du diabète juvénile. Un match exhibition a eu lieu entre l'équipe de JDS Uniphase et un groupe de curleurs ayant une déficience visuelle. «Ce match a suscité plus d'intérêt dans le sport et sensibilisé davantage au fait que la cécité chez les adultes est l'une des principales complications du diabète.»

Mme Mason affirme que l'Ottawa Hunt and Country Club a été exceptionnel en ce qui concerne la réponse aux besoins des organisateurs en plus d'être l'un des principaux contributeurs au succès de l'événement. M. Villeneuve a aussi fait l'éloge de l'Ottawa Curling Club pour son appui. «Le club a été sensationnel et nous a très bien traités», a-t-il mentionné. Tous deux croient que les clubs accroissent leur crédibilité dans la collectivité par l'organisation d'événements

Événement charitables : une véritable mine d'or.



de bienfaisance. Non seulement les clubs montrent-ils leur disposition à aider les organismes de bienfaisance locaux, mais ils présentent le curling et leurs établissements à des gens qui ne se sont jamais adonnés au sport.

«Je pense que nous initiions beaucoup de personnes au sport du curling», continue M. Villeneuve. «La plupart des participants à notre événement n'ont jamais joué auparavant. Ils y prennent plaisir, s'amuse beaucoup et attendent avec impatience d'y participer de nouveau l'an prochain.»

Mais la principale raison de l'engagement de M. Villeneuve est le désir d'aider. «Qui sait, peut-être un jour j'aurai besoin d'un rein», fait-il observer. «Je pourrais même tirer beaucoup plus de ces événements.»

(La morale de cette histoire est simple. Les événements de curling de bienfaisance sont une nouvelle source d'affaires pour les clubs canadiens de curling. Ils se déroulent habituellement pendant les heures creuses, font participer beaucoup de non-joueurs, produisent des recettes considérables provenant de la vente d'aliments et de boissons et mettent mieux en vue l'établissement. Cherchez les entreprises qui organisent des tournois de golf ou d'autres activités estivales de bienfaisance et offrez-leur votre installation et l'utilisation de votre glace. Votre contribution à l'œuvre de bienfaisance pourrait être le don de temps de glace et d'heures de travail de votre personnel. Compte tenu de l'installation, les organismes de bienfaisance mettront à l'œuvre leur armée de bénévoles et organiseront la journée. De même, le club devrait être prêt à offrir d'excellents repas et un service de bar de premier ordre. Travaillez ensemble et tant l'organisme de bienfaisance que le club en profiteront. C'est assurément bénéfique à tous.)

Barry Campbell est rédacteur au Ottawa Sun



The "Crazy Spiel" at the West Kildonan Curling Club.



West Kildonan's Joe Isfjord

PROMOTION FROM WITHIN

Club Manager Takes New Spin to Generate Interest for the Game

By Bruce Deachman

It must be an odd sight, for sure; Joe Isfjord out doing his annual spring tree planting. Between 75 and 100 spruce trees, each four or five feet in height, comprise this new, fragrant forest. He stands back and surveys the scene for a moment, making sure they're all standing straight and are evenly spaced.

"One of the ones on sheet two is leaning over a bit," someone shouts.

Isfjord, the ice-maker and manager of Winnipeg's West Kildonan Curling Club, is preparing to stage his season-ending funspiel, the "Crazy Spiel," an event he's been running for 15 years now. It's certainly a different take on the proverbial little house in the woods; in fact, with five sheets at his disposal in this 1,200-member club, there are now 10 houses in the woods.

For those better acquainted with Isfjord or the club, however, the scene is not all that strange. This is, after all, the West Kildonan – one of the fun ones.

And while that's long been the club's reputation, it's also been one of Isfjord's priorities in his 24-year association with the club-10 as manager – to keep it that way.

"Where fun is number-one," boasts Isfjord. "Put it this way," he adds, "if it wasn't fun, I wouldn't have been here for 24 years."

But this isn't just personal. It's not simply about keeping himself interested. It's about keeping his members happy. "In places like Winnipeg," he says, "that has to be a priority. There are 20 or 21 clubs in the city alone and maybe eight more in the surrounding area."

Isfjord says he can't stress enough the importance of keeping current members happy, of retaining a satisfied core. "That's the key. I think that too many clubs are caught up trying to find new curlers. He continues, "Keep the ones you have happy, and they'll find you new curlers. The best advertising is word-of-mouth, there's no question about that. It takes months and months to find a customer, but only a few seconds to lose them, right? So why worry all summer about finding new people?"

Isfjord points to the changing demands of curlers over recent years as the driving force behind keeping members happy. "Years ago," he says, "everybody curled twice a week, and still curled in the mixed league on the weekends. So everybody curled three times a week.

"You could have had the worst executive in the world, and you were still full. Nowadays, we've got some of the best executives, and we've still got open spots. And that's because people are curling just once a week. There are just too many other things for people to do, with computers and the Internet and whatever. There's far more for people to do nowadays, and we're competing with all of that.

"Curling is an entertainment avenue for people and if they're going to choose to curl, it'll probably only be once a week, not three times anymore. And we've got to take care of those people when they're only here for a couple of hours."

The West Kildonan, Isfjord points out, is not the most competitive of clubs. Neither Jeff Stoughton nor Kerry Burtnyk has curled there. He calls it a meat-and-potatoes club, where most of

"...too many clubs are caught up trying to find new curlers... Keep the ones you have happy, and they'll find you new curlers..."

– Joe Isfjord
Manager, West
Kildonan Curling Club,
Winnipeg, Manitoba



Keeping the sport fun.

the members curl for the fun, the love of the game, the camaraderie.

"We definitely have to take that and expand on it," he says. "You don't make money on competitive curlers. Vic Peters told me once that the worst guys you want in your club are competitive curlers. As far as I'm concerned, when you're putting an ad in the paper for curlers, you shouldn't say "Curlers Wanted." Curlers are the worst people you want in a curling club. Do you really want someone who's been curling for 25 years (to join) your club? 'Cause all they're going to do is compare your ice and your club and your prices to everywhere else they've been – and you know what curlers are like.

"What you want are people in your club. And you want minorities to get into curling, and more younger people. And you've got to make them feel good." If his "Crazy 'Spiel" is any indication, Isfjord knows how to do that. For the past six years, he's been consistently getting 80-90 teams entering his enchanted 10-day forest of a bonspiel. In some ways, he says, it more resembles miniature golf.

"We guarantee five games, because each sheet is different," he says. "There are the trees. I freeze in over sixty tires. The rocks go over bridges, they go under things. We have special drink prices all week long, and we have people serving drinks out on the ice."

The benefits, according to Isfjord, reach far beyond just the bonspiel itself.

"You'd be surprised how many curlers I've gotten in the men's leagues and the mixed league out of that. Simply because you're exposing people to the club, you're exposing them to the game." He continues, "A lot of people don't want to try curling because of how they're going to do, of how bad they're going to be, but this slowly gets them into it. If a club can do a couple of things like that a year, it'll help."

Isfjord admits that staging an event like his "Crazy 'Spiel" does take some work. "It's about three days getting ready for it," he says, adding with a laugh, "and longer cleaning up.

"But it looks really nice. And last year, we built a deck out there, with patio table and umbrellas. You had to throw the rock under the deck. I took the hacks out and made people throw from the tee-line, sitting on a bench."

They also add other incentives, like a karaoke night and free hotdogs and coke one-day.

"You want this to be a real open-house feeling," he says. "Curling clubs are always worried about spending money. You know what? You've got to spend money to make money."

He continues, "Spend money when times are tough and people will recognize that you're a club that's happening, that you're a club that's going to be there. People don't want to curl in a club that they think is going to close in another year or two. They don't want to be associated with it."

Bruce Deachman is a writer for the Ottawa Citizen



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REMEMBERING ONE OF THE GREATS

Schmirler Foundation Set for Big Impact on the Game's Smallest Contingent

By Bruce Deachman

In the summer of 1980, a 22-year old man, having lost one leg to osteogenic sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer, attempted to run across the country.

He intended that his westward "Marathon of Hope," which was stopped short in Thunder Bay when it was discovered he had cancer in his lungs, would raise both awareness and money for cancer research. His goal was to raise one dollar for each Canadian.

His four-and-a-half month trek raised \$1.7 million during its course, and a subsequent national outpouring of emotion and grief added an additional \$23 million. Since then, the Terry Fox Foundation has been steadily raising more money every year to help discover a cure for cancer. In 1981, its inaugural year, the foundation raised \$3.5 million. Last year, it raised \$17.9 million – an increase of more than 500 per cent from its first year.

The Canadian Curling Association and Sandra Schmirler's family are hoping that the memory of the Saskatchewan skip, who deeply touched and moved Canadians from all avenues with her warmth, her caring and her bravery until cancer took her life earlier this year, will do the same for other Canadians in need.

The Sandra Schmirler Foundation is being set up this season and will, through club activities, as well as corporate and private donations, raise funds to be given to various children's causes.

"The Foundation," says CCA Chief Executive Officer Dave Parkes, "will help commemorate Sandra's achievements and love for children, through an ongoing and formal process that would see monies generated through various means and distributed to selected children's charities."

Scott Paper, for example – sponsor of the Canadian Women's Curling Championship – will be running a promotion from the New Year until around the time of the women's finals, during which period a portion of the sale of Scott products will go to the foundation. Nokia, too, is expected to be involved, through their charities of choice – Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

At the individual club level, although nothing had been formalized to date, the CCA is busy putting together a menu of programs

and activities in which clubs across Canada can participate. An annual "Sandra Schmirler Day" is being planned as well to coincide with the first day of curling at the Scott. "There will be a Sandra Schmirler Foundation Kit that goes to curling clubs, which will contain a number of suggestions of ways they can include curlers and non-curlers in activities at their club that week, all with a view to generating revenue into the foundation, and celebrating family, the fun of curling and all those things that were special to her," says Parkes.

He adds that the magnitude of Schmirler's accomplishments during her life, not to mention the sheer number of people whose lives were affected by both her triumphs and her tragic death, demanded this sort of response. "It was tempting to do the obvious," he says, "to make a Sandra Schmirler trophy



or something like that, but it just didn't seem to cut it. Says Parkes, "We wanted to do something bigger and grander, something with a longer impact, in keeping with the impact that Sandra has had."

The foundation, while administered by the CCA, will be a distinct entity, and will be guided by a board of trustees, which the Schmirler family will help select. As well, Parkes is hoping to attract some high-profile Canadians such as Wayne Gretzky to help get things up and running.

"We are realistic to think that this won't generate millions of dollars in the short-term, but once it gets established and its profile gets ensconced, that it has the potential to generate millions of dollars in a year."

Bruce Deachman writes for the Ottawa Citizen

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A Sign Of The Times

Curling Provides New Opportunities for Non-Traditional Players

By Barre Campbell

Jock Tyre has opened the doors of his curling club to welcome people with mental and physical disabilities – an action, which he suggests, has benefited both his club and the sport.

"It is not acceptable for a curling club not to reach out to these people," says Tyre, manager of the Kelowna Curling Club in B.C. "We're Canadian. We don't shove people into the background."

This philosophy is one the Canadian Curling Association hopes that other club managers will adopt in the near future. To this end, the CCA is working to enhance opportunities in the sport for people with disabilities through programs like the Special Olympics. The association is also attempting to increase the awareness of disability issues in clubs across the country.

CCA general manager Dave Parkes suggests that curling should be accessible to all Canadians. "Equal access is something pretty fundamental. The club is a service, and people with disabilities are members of the community." He continues, "It's common sense that clubs should be made accessible to all members of the community. When that happens, all sorts of neat things happen."

The CCA's efforts are starting to take effect. Last winter, for example, curling gained recognition as a demonstration sport for the first time at the national Winter Special Olympics in Ottawa. Many observers, including those from the Canadian Special Olympics committee, were impressed with the high caliber of competition and the spirit of friendship exhibited among the competitors.

"We feel that the sport lends itself very well to our athletes," says Ray Allard, vice-president of Sport, Canadian Special Olympics. "We were pleasantly surprised by the skill level. We weren't sure what to expect in this sport because it was a first (competition) at a national level."

Six provinces – Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, B.C. and P.E.I. – sent teams to the competition. The participation of six provinces or territories is the minimum requirement for a sport to become sanctioned as an official Special Olympics sport. Curling will gain official sport classification at the 2002 Canadian Special Olympics if six provinces or territories hold provincial championships

for disabled athletes during the next two winters.

Parkes believes the momentum created by last year's competition will ensure that curling satisfies the requirements to gain official Special Olympics status. "I think our sport is a perfect fit," he says. "The players are challenged to combine strategic requirements with physical ones, but without the physical need to be six-foot tall and 200 pounds."

World champions Jon Mead and Gary Vandenberghe, members of the Jeff Stoughton team from Winnipeg, offered their support for the tournament and attended the championship matches. Both players work with Special Olympics curlers in Manitoba.

"They were phenomenal," says Parkes. "Jon and Gary were mobbed by the players, because the players were getting a chance to meet their idols." The CCA is also working towards gaining recognition for curling as an official sport at the 2006 Winter Paralympic Games in Italy. Wheelchair athletes participated in a high-performance camp in Kelowna, B.C. last winter, and many quickly achieved a high level of proficiency.

"The results were there," says Parkes. The athletes released the stones, using a throw-assist pole, from three feet behind the near hog line. The CCA is currently petitioning the World Curling Federation to increase the sport's accessibility to disabled persons. Last year in Switzerland, a European curling tournament hosted wheelchair athletes from Sweden, France and the host country. The CCA is sending a Canadian team to Switzerland in January for a tournament that will host teams from eight, perhaps nine, countries.

"It falls short of a world championship, but it's a step forward," says Parkes.

Tyre believes that clubs across the country can make similar progress by increasing accessibility to disabled Canadians. "It's a win-win situation," he says. "It fills some empty space and gets people into the building who wouldn't otherwise be here."

"You know, curling isn't an 'old boys' club anymore. It's changed. It's becoming much more open, but some clubs don't recognize that and they're suffering. It's a business and it's got to be looked at that way."

Tyre says that he eagerly anticipates the day when a disabled curling event is held in conjunction with the Brier and Scott Tournament of Hearts, and where the enthusiasm and skill of the athletes will be displayed in front of large audiences.

"It would be just like the Olympics," he says. "These people are probably the most enthusiastic people I've worked with. I think that day will come."

Barre Campbell is a writer for the Ottawa Sun

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