

Volunteers needed for outdoor community ice rinks across Caledon]

By Zachary Roman

Outdoor ice rinks are a winter staple in Canada.

The Town of Caledon has announced it is seeking volunteers to support ice rinks at various locations in the community.

Ice rink volunteers will be in charge of maintaining the ice surface at their chosen rink from January until March (weather dependent), and will communicate with the Town about the status of their rink throughout the season.

Jessica Stovin, Caledon's Manager of Community Recreation, explained the outdoor rink program has been around for a long time but really took off during the pandemic.

The Town ran a few outdoor rinks during the pandemic, but has now switched back to its usual support role. That being said, the Town will still manage two outdoor ice rinks at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness this winter, noted Stovin.

The Town's support role in helping Caledon residents build and maintain ice rinks in their community includes the following: providing tarp for the rinks' bases, wood for the rinks' frames, help building the rinks, ice maintenance education, and coordinating with local fire departments for the initial flooding of the rink.

Stovin explained there's a lead volunteer at each outdoor community rink, who must be supported by at least six other volunteers. The volunteers provide daily rink inspection logs to the Town.

There are a number of communities which already have a team ready to build a rink, and those are: Inglewood, Alton, Valleywood, Mono Mills, Caledon Village, Palgrave, and Humberview.

Interested parties can volunteer to help with those rinks, or if they do not see their community represented, can contact the Town of Caledon to begin the process of planning for a rink in their community.

Stovin said many community rinks have been established for many years and have a dedicated team of volunteers who keep them going year after year.

Betty Starr is a member of the Alton community who helps out with the administrative side of her community's rink each year. Located at the local ball diamond, it's quite a big rink and because of its location, it's able to be lit up at night. Starr was quick to give a big shout out to Alton resident Mike Weston, who she said has been flooding the community rink for over 30 years.

Starr said after school and on weekends, the Alton rink is used by all kinds of community members, from kids learning to skate to hockey players playing shinny.

"It's nice to see that the kids have a place they can go (skating) that's safe," said Starr. "They used to skate on the ponds but you'd hate to see something happen. The ball diamond (rink) is really nice and it's safe."

Those interested in volunteering or starting a rink are asked to contact the Town's recreation department by email at recreation@caledon.ca by December 1.