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IMPACTING YOUR
COMMUNITY

James Culic/Metroland

Logan Cooper, 7, and his sister Avery, love shooting hoops. The Youth Special Olympics program in Port Colborne will make sure all children can learn basic sporting skills.

DREAM TEAM DREAMIN' WITH LOGAN

JAMES CULIC
jculic@niagarathisweek.com

When you ask Logan Cooper about this favourite hockey team, you have to draw a very clear distinction. The Buffalo Sabres are

his favourite NHL team, but they are not his favourite hockey team.

"I like the Niagara Whalers," said seven-year-old Logan with a sharp nod. "They're the best."

Logan has a pile of game pucks

(nearly as tall as he is) given to him by Whalers players who appreciate his enthusiastic support. Logan loves hockey, basketball and his sister, Avery.

"My favourite Whalers player is Mason, he's number 40," said

four-year-old Avery, who pipes in whenever her big brother talks about hockey. "And last time we went to a Whalers game, we saw my friend there."

Logan interjects, "It was my friend."

"Yeah," admits Avery. "It was Logan's friend."

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NEWS

PROGRAM REMOVES BARRIERS TO ENTRY FOR SPORT

Continued from page 5

Logan's love of sport seems boundless, and his sister is more than happy to abide his passion for play. Between the front door and the living where I found Logan, I counted five different basketball nets; some hanging from the walls, others lower on the ground and perfect for alley-oop dunks.

"They're pretty big basketball fans, as you can see," said Morgan Cooper, gesturing to all the nets. Fostering her son's enthusiasm for sport has always been important to Cooper, and she wanted to make sure that Logan's Down syndrome didn't create a barrier to entry that would keep him away from the thing he loves. So, she called up the woman who knows everything about that kind of thing.

Dori Schooley brought the Ontario Special Olympics program to Port Colborne about

THE ISSUE:
CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME LOVE SPORTS TOO
LOCAL IMPACT: A NEW SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAM IS LAUNCHING



four decades ago, and has been the local co-ordinator ever since. Last year she was inducted into the Port Colborne Sports Wall of Fame for her years of service to the Ontario Special Olympics program.

"When I spoke to (Schooley), she said she was looking to hand over the reins of the program, so I volunteered, and now here I am," said Cooper. "I really appreciate everything she has done over the years,



James Culic/Metroland

Logan will be participating in the new Special Olympics program in Port Colborne on Mondays.

and I can't wait to keep things going."

This week, Cooper is launching a new youth-focused Special Olympics program aimed at children seven-12. The program will teach fundamental sport skills like kicking, throwing and catching.

The Special Olympics Port Colborne program is held Mondays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Community Living, 100 McRae Ave. in Port Colborne. It is open to children from Port Colborne or any of the surrounding communities.

To get involved, or for inquiries, contact Cooper at portcolborne@specialolympicsontario.ca or 289-990-8781.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY

The Port Colborne Leader has written about the Youth Special Olympics when they were organized by Dori Schooley, and was asked to help write about the transition to a new organizer who is launching a new youth-focused Special Olympics program.

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GREEN LIGHT FOR RETAIL CANNABIS STORES IN PORT COLBORNE

JAMES CULIC
jculic@niagarathisweek.com

Entrepreneurial green thumbs will be able to open a retail cannabis store in Port Colborne, after councillors voted 6-2 in favour of the opt into the provincial cannabis program. Legal cannabis is already being sold to Port Colborne residents through the province's online store, but opening a physical store within city limits is now also on the table.

By taking the opt-in, council secured an initial payment of \$13,000 and set itself up to score additional cannabis sale profits, which the provincial government says it will be sharing with municipalities, but, only those which opt-in to allowing retail cannabis stores to set up shop within their borders. Even with the opt-in, pot shops are unlikely to start springing up around Port Colborne any time soon, as provincewide retail store licenses have been limited to just 25,

and only one has been allotted for all of Niagara. The first 25 licenses are also required to go in a city with a population of at least 50,000, which disqualifies Port Colborne from the first round. With a cut of the profit, but no actual possibility of having to deal with a real cannabis store in the city, many councillors saw it as a win-win.

"So, there's no licence, and there's no applications in front of us to actually build one of these, but we still get the money," said Ward 3 Coun. Frank Danch. "That's good money for the taxpayers."

How much of those profits will be shared with Port Colborne is anyone's guess; as noted in a staff report about the issue, how much profit is being generated by the Ontario Cannabis Store is unknown, and the exact revenue sharing model is still in flux. But as many councillors noted, some money is better than no money.

"I think we're about two years

away from even seeing a (cannabis) store here anyway," said Ward 3 Coun. Gary Bruno, who also claimed to have spoken to an "undercover detective" who advised him to take the opt-in.

The two lone dissenting votes came from Ward 1 Coun. Donna Kalailieff and Ward 4 Coun. Harry Wells.

"I'm not sure we have all the accurate information we need to make a decision," said Kalailieff, who favoured taking the opt-out in the short term and assessing the situation down the line once other municipalities had dealt with the issue. The opt-out clause offered by the province is single-use, meaning the city could have taken the opt-out before the Jan. 22 deadline, and still been allowed to opt in later, but because Port Colborne has already taken the opt-in, it can never opt out again.

"This decision is going to be with us forever," said Kalailieff. "We should sit back for now."

Ward 2 Coun. Eric Beaugard,



Metroland File Photo

By taking the opt-in, city council has paved the way for a retail store to open in Port Colborne which can sell cannabis to local residents.

gard, the youngest member of council, was the most ardent supporter of taking the opt-in.

"This legislation has been created with the intent to combat the black market, which does exist in Port Colborne," said Beaugard. "This is going to be sold online, no matter what decision we make, so it's in the best interest of Port Colborne and the taxpayers to benefit from this, and the only way to do that is by opting in today."