

Alberta Doctors' Digest

AMA Youth Run Club pivots

Last October, the [AMA Youth Run Club](#) hosted its first ever [virtual fun run](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a physical activity opportunity for more than 1,400 Alberta students.

In a time of cohorts, face masks, distancing and social restrictions, physical activity unfortunately took a backseat for many. Immediate safety came first, and while commendable, the need for movement was abundantly clear. While the AMA Youth Run Club is already a free, fun, flexible and inclusive program designed to engage students who are not traditionally physically active, this year brought new challenges: With many students engaging in distance learning and cancelled school-related activities, how could run clubs possibly continue?

The coordinators behind the program, Hayley Degaust and Krista Trim of Ever Active Schools, sought creative solutions that would allow all students in Alberta to participate in new ways.

“We had to postpone our spring events, and it soon became clear that we wouldn’t be able to gather in the fall. After the success of our COVID-19-inspired [AMA Youth Run Club At Home](#), we figured we would try a virtual run where schools and individuals could register and run of their own accord, alongside schools across the province,” said Krista.

And so began the first ever [Virtual Fun Run, Walk and Roll!](#)

The event was free for registered AMA Youth Run Clubs to participate (even those running at home), and all forms of [locomotor movement](#) were encouraged to ensure the events was accessible for all. Clubs participated in the 2.5- or 5-kilometre distance in their own space.

From Indigenous school communities to urban dwellers to colony schools, 21 schools participated – and more than 1,400 students across Alberta took advantage of the fun opportunity to get moving and be united in their efforts to stay active and healthy.

“We obviously would have loved to have hosted many larger, in-person events across the province like we usually do, but due to the realities of COVID-19, that was just not a possibility in 2020,” Krista said. “The virtual fun run was a huge success. Schools were really excited to be a part of something and be able to participate in something.”

“We are keen to host another virtual fun run in the spring,” she continued. “Lots of our clubs start up at that time, so it’s a great way to engage more schools and offer a kick-start for those clubs!”

Banner image: Members of Little Buffalo School’s and Amisk Community School’s Youth Run Clubs participated in the virtual fun run, October 5-9, 2020. Pictured are students from Little Buffalo School.