

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Not even the AMA Youth Run Club could escape the pandemic

It's official. There has been not one single thing in the past year plus that has been "normal." You know, "normal" as in the way things used to be pre-pandemic. That includes the AMA Youth Run Club.

[Last spring](#), when students started to learn from home – and teachers began to work around the clock – Ever Active Schools got to work expanding their online physical activity tools and resources to help schools ([How to Host a Fun Run/Join the Club!](#)) and families ([AMA Youth Run Club at Home](#)) adjust their Youth Run Clubs and physical activity offerings to align with the public health guidelines.

The benefits were multi-fold for YRCs that made the temporary switch early in the pandemic to become virtual clubs. It didn't take long for teachers, students and parents to realize that if there was ever a time that we needed outdoor exercise options, it was during a pandemic, not just for the physical benefits, but perhaps even more for the mental and emotional benefits.

Continuing to provide support

Although a few Youth Run Clubs hosted virtual fun runs last May and in early June, for the AMA and EAS it was a quiet spring as schools were occupied with public health priorities. Like the veritable Groundhog Day feeling of this pandemic, the YRC's 2020 fall season was more of the same, with fewer clubs than normal in spite of EAS's valiant offering of new initiatives and ideas to schools.

"We continued to provide support to schools via the YRC e-newsletter, direct home mail outs and downloadable resources," says Brian Torrance, Ever Active Schools Director. "Schools have been doing absolutely everything possible this past year and a half to maintain student activities, but the uptake of new initiatives has fluctuated significantly."

"We have great admiration for the immense amount of work going on in schools at this time," Brian adds. "We'll continue to support schools where they are at, while also building capacity for the 2021-22 school year. More than ever, the importance to reconnect to physical activity and to get maximum use and enjoyment from the outdoors is essential for students."

Signs of an energetic spring

At the publication deadline for this May-June 2021 edition of *Alberta Doctors' Digest*, all signs were pointing to a refreshingly energetic spring for the AMA YRC. With 18 primarily smaller, rural schools registered to host virtual Fun Runs in May, and over 4,000 students registered to participate, things were looking up! The May scheduling of the Fun Runs coincided meaningfully with [CMHA Mental Health Week \(#GetReal\)](#), May 3 to 9.

AMA Youth Run Club sponsors

Since it began in 2013, with 4,000 kids and 77 schools, the AMA Youth Run Club has been steadily growing in participant numbers and expanding its program offerings. This school-based, inclusive health and physical activity initiative would not be possible without the support of our generous [program sponsors](#): Alberta Blue Cross (gold); MD Financial Management & Scotiabank Healthcare+ (silver); and Canadian Tire Jumpstart (in-kind).

Banner image: Students from two northern Alberta schools — [Little Buffalo School](#) (pictured) and [Amisk Community School](#) — participated in a YRC Fun Run