

Healthy Kids planning community hydration stations

By Sarah Sobanski

The Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC) is looking to help local communities stay hydrated in partnership with the public health unit.

As part of the new Water Does Wonders theme by the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, HPEPH is accepting applications for places to install water stations. Not-for-profit and publicly funded organizations are encouraged to apply for water bottle refill stations, water fountains, water coolers and other water dispensers.

“By purchasing new hydration stations for the community, we hope to make it easier for kids and their families to choose water as their beverage of choice to stay healthy and hydrated,” said Emma Pillsworth, local project manager for the Healthy Kids Community Challenge for Hastings Prince Edward. “Water is essential to keep kids' bodies working and growing properly and we want to make it as readily available as possible.”

The initiative plans to support better access to water for children and their families. The idea is that the more hydration stations available, the more water Hastings Prince Edwards locals will drink.

The Water Does Wonders theme came into effect in July, and will run until March 2017. It aims to raise awareness that water is a healthier alternative than sugary juices and sodas which children often reach for first.

Over half of a child's body weight is water, which HPEPH reported means water is essential to keeping their bodies working and growing properly. It also said children develop their dietary preferences between birth and four years old. It suggested that making water a drink of choice for children early on encourages drinking more water later in life.

The challenge promotes a series of themes geared towards children's health in physical activity, healthy eating and healthy habits. It stems from over \$1 million in funding towards healthy living in surrounding counties by the province over the next three years.

“I am excited to move forward with the second theme of Ontario's Healthy Kids Community Challenge,” said Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. “Helping kids and their families to make healthy choices in their everyday lives is an important part of our plan to help Ontarians lead happier, healthier lives.”

“We have lots of great activities planned as a part of this theme, including a social marketing campaign, community hydration stations, a water education month in schools, competitions, and much more,” said Pillsworth. “There will be a number of opportunities for kids, families, and other community members to participate in Water Does Wonders activities in schools and at community events.”

Publicly funded and not-for-profit organizations in Hastings Prince Edward counties can submit their applications for hydration stations at healthykidshpe.ca/community-hydration-stations/. HPEPH will accept applications until Sept. 30.