

# Everybody Active

A joint initiative of the BC Recreation & Parks Association and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon

## Increasing Access Success Story

### Woman Alive! Femme Active!™



#### Why it started...

Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ was developed when recreation staff noticed that a majority of fee subsidy applicants were women applying on behalf of their children. Staff recognized that the primary health provider in the family, generally mothers, needed opportunities to be physically active themselves. After an unsuccessful initial pilot, the coordinators hosted focus groups with low-income women to find out what they want and need in a program. The program was revised according to the focus group input and it was an immediate success.

Not only did the program address the various barriers identified in the focus groups, the women who provided input not only participated in the program, but also played a key role in recruiting new participants and word of mouth promotion. Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ has been offered in the Ottawa area for ten years and has expanded to four community facilities. It is offered in both English and French.

#### What it is...

Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ offers a holistic approach to healthy living for women, ensuring time for physical activity, health education and social network development. The physical activity component is lead by a certified fitness leader who organizes a variety physical activity opportunities for participants to try. The health education time is lead by a community health nurse who facilitates discussion on a range of health issues. The social time is an informal time for participants to get to know one another and develop a supportive network.

This is a school-year program with three 1 to 1.5 hour sessions per week. Participants are charged \$1 per session. A typical week might look like:

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
	Social (9:30-10:00am)	
Health (10:00-10:30am)	Health (10:00-10:30am)	Health (10:00-10:30am)
Physical Activity (10:30-11:00am)	Physical Activity (10:30-11:00am)	Physical Activity (10:30-11:00am)

This program has now expanded to five community facilities in the Ottawa area, including community centres and pools. The activities vary depending on the location, but all share the same principles of introducing participants to a range of physical activities, education sessions

[www.PhysicalActivityStrategy.ca](http://www.PhysicalActivityStrategy.ca)

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on healthy living, and an informal time for participants to socialize and network. Co-programming opportunities also exist, such as the “Break-a-wave” program, to facilitate the participation of the primary care-giver, mom.

**Why this initiative is a promising practice...**

Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ is considered a promising practice because the program focuses on improving the health of the primary care-giver in the family and removing barriers such as cost and child care. The program capitalizes on known success factors in programming for women, such as female-only opportunities, basic skill development, introduction to a variety of topics and activities, opportunity to provide input on such topics and activities, social network development, and positive support from the leader.

In addition, participants are never made to ‘prove’ their income status, and are always welcome in the program even if they’ve taken the class before. The most important aspect is that the women are physically active and learning about healthy living.

Finally, it is a model of partnership between municipal recreation, community health services and community organizations that provide services to people living in poverty. Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ celebrates its ten-year anniversary in 2008.

**Find out more...**

Woman Alive! Femme Active!™ is a program offered in partnership by the City of Ottawa’s public health and recreation departments. Visit [www.ottawa.ca/residents/health/adults/woman\\_health\\_en.html](http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/health/adults/woman_health_en.html) for more information.

To learn more about how you could offer a similar program in *your community*, check out the “How did they do it?” profile on the Everybody Active page @ [www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca](http://www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca).