

YMCA ■ PROMOTING ■ FAMILY HEALTH

10,000 expected at YMCA Healthy Kids Day



Kids hang out in the gymnastics program at the Langara Family YMCA in 1981.

Like most things at the YMCA, health programs began because there was a need in the community. While many know about our adult programs, a dig into the YMCA's 125-year history shows we have been an important part of life for the whole family. Families that need resources, skills, support, friendship and the opportunity to pursue a healthier life.

It all began with the Y's first gymnasium in 1887, offering baseball, basketball, soccer, rugby, lacrosse and group fitness to the rapidly growing city. Women then participated in the first women's gym class in 1894. The YMCA opened Vancouver's first "swimming tank" in 1907, and 69 boys enrolled in the Y's first free Learn-to-Swim campaign in 1909. Teenagers and young adults also began attending in the '20s—adding to the growing YMCA community.

One of the most dramatic shifts in the Y's history was triggered by the 1970 Physical Education Study which found that to really impact the health of Vancouver, programs needed to move from a focus on in-

dividual groups to a central focus on family. It was then that the "Vancouver Family YMCA" came into being—what is now known as the YMCA of Greater Vancouver.

Our commitment to family health has never been stronger. With only 7% of youth and 15% of adults in Canada meeting daily physical activity requirements, the need for effective and engaging health programs is great. That's why the YMCA continues to hold Healthy Kids Day—a free annual healthy living fair for families. This year's event on Saturday, June 4th, is expected to bring 10,000 people to five YMCA locations across the Lower Mainland.

Langara Family YMCA member, Mara St. Onge, and her two children Dylan (7) and Daria (5) have been attending Healthy Kids Day for three years. Although the YMCA incorporates healthy practices into its programs for youth year round, YMCA Healthy Kid's

Day is designed to help kids and families embrace healthy habits that become life-long practice. The event focuses on fun and engaging activities, practical information and simple ways to live healthier lives. "My kids have had the chance to participate in new physical activities," says Mara. "After riding the horses, my daughter wants riding lessons while my son has joined the new children's triathlon group after participating in the mini-triathlon."

"The YMCA has made a huge difference in the health of my family," says Mara. "I have very vocal children and they often tell our extended family that they need to exercise so that they don't get heart disease," she says.

"This event is a great combination of community connection, fitness and fun—a day that can propel families to embrace healthy living...I know we have."



Mara, Dylan and Daria having fun at the Langara Family YMCA in 2011— one of five YMCA Healthy Kids Day locations.



**YMCA Healthy Kids Day is Saturday, June 4th from 10am - 3pm.
Visit www.healthykidsday.ca for location information**