

Kids learn value of recreation

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Byline: Kate Smitko
Column: Kate Smitko
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It's something kids hear often from their parents--'you need to find something to do' or 'you're spending too much time in front of a screen.'

And a lot of kids agree, "Most girls in my class love playing on the computer or watching TV and most of the boys are really into video games," says Kate Rushfeldt, a 13-year-old student at St. James Elementary School in Calgary.

But Kate and the rest of her Grade 8 class had an eye-opening experience after attending 'National Child Day' back in November.

"We got to see just how important recreation is for kids," says Kate who is really involved in dance. "The presentation taught us that kids who are part of a team and involved in recreation, like dance, are less likely to become involved in gangs," she says.

The event was hosted by Up-Start, a **United Way** initiative that focuses on ensuring children and youth have opportunities to grow up great.

The organization works collaboratively on issues that no one organization could address on its own, and it focuses on the underlying causes of the problems that negatively influence our children and youth. The critical out-of-school hours are when all kids should be involved in quality, supervised activities.

"We know kids only spend 25 per cent of their time in school. That time out of school is critical for their development," says Graham Clyne, Director of **UpStart**.

Kate, along with her friends Festus Kusi-Sekyere and Katherine Kryczmanik decided to help their friends and peers find something to do after-school.

"We were the only class at the National Child Day event, so we thought it was important to share what we learned with other kids in our school," says Festus.

"We started doing research on all the activities kids could be doing afterschool," says Katherine.

"We took all that research and created a board that our friends and kids in

younger grades could stop to look at it when they're walking through the hallway--it asked 'What are you doing afterschool?' " she says.

"There are swimming lessons, dance classes, sports teams to join, drama and book clubs--I was so surprised at how much there is to do," says Kate.

And they each have their favourite activity.

"I like playing sports, but I also love reading--my favourite book is Airborne by Kenneth Oppel," says Festus.

"I just really like that book." "My favourite activity is either basketball or volleyball, I love them both" says Katherine.

Their creation has received a lot of attention from the rest of the school. And, since all three of them are in Grade 8 they're hoping the message continues once they move on to high school.

"I hope the board stays there for awhile--it's important for kids see how much there is to do, other than just watching TV or playing on the computer," says Kate.

For more information on what kids can be doing after-school, call 211 or go to Calgary Youth Recreation / Leisure Directory at [www. at www.informcalgary.ca](http://www.informcalgary.ca)