

Grande Prairie Gymnastics Celebrates 30 years as a Non-profit Society

The Grande Prairie Gymnastic Society (Gymniks) will begin their 30th year of operation this fall. The club was started in 1973 and became a registered society in 1980. The club has grown to accommodate 3500 registrations in the 2009-2010 year, and continues to expand with new programs and classes.

The Grande Prairie Gymniks Club was founded in 1973 by a group of parents including Dr. Bob Waldenberger and Diana (Kuhlman) Tissington, who shared the same passion for gymnastics. Beth Goldie, currently Physical Education instructor at the Grande Prairie Regional College, pioneered a tradition of coaching excellence the Gymniks can be proud of.

The Gymniks have produced three National Champions in Rhonda Wilson, Kelly Ottenbreit and Erin McCabe as well as numerous Provincial Champions throughout the years. Kelly Ottenbreit also attended World Championships in power tumbling, and Ryan Sheehan has attended World Age Group championships for the last three years in a row, as well as the last two Pan-American Championships. Several Gymniks members have also attended Western Canadian Championships.

Heather Scott, in 1996, and Stacey Head, in 1997, captured the Class II Alberta Championship while Jessie Wills won the Class III Provincial title in 1998. Shauna Telford won Class 2 Provincial in 1999 and the Class 3 Provincial Championship in 2001. 2001 also witnessed the Class 4 Provincial Championship victory of Stacey Head and the domination of Keely McCabe at the AGF Class 2 Provincials. In 2003, Alyssa Krisa captured the Class 3 provincial title while Megan Walsh became Class 1 Provincial Champion. Keely McCabe became Western Canadian champion in 2005 while Alyssa Zack earned the Class II Alberta Championship crown the same year. In 2006, Ashley Goretzky earned the Provincial I Open provincial title. In 2007, Megan Walsh won the Alberta Class 4 title in front of a very proud home town crown and, in 2008, Sara Zack captured the Class 4 provincial championship. Most recently, in 2010, Sara Zack earned the title of Provincial level 5 open champion.

The Gymniks initially trained in “set up, take down” multipurpose facilities. The GPRC gymnasium served as the Gymniks first training center. Many years later, the Club moved to a Richmond Industrial Park 3000 sq. foot multipurpose center located next to Tartan Auto Body. The first “dedicated space” facility was acquired through the purchase of a 10,000 sq. foot warehouse located behind the Quality Hotel in the industrial park. In September of 2005, the Gymniks moved to their new world class 50,000 sq. foot gymnastic training center considered as one of the biggest, state-of-the-art gymnastic training centres in the country.

On August 30th from 11-2pm the Gymniks will be hosting a barbeque at their facility, 16 Knowledge Way (beside the new Multiplex). Hot dogs and pop will be available and all donations from the barbeque will go to KidSport Grande Prairie and area. Fall registration will also take place on the same day from 9-4pm. For more information please call the Gymniks at 539-1414.

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