



Colton McCormick, left, raced TJ Barker during last Thursday's skating party at the newly-repaired La Vallee community rink.

'Project Sunset' helps fix up rink

By Duane Hicks

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Students involved with "Project Sunset" at Crossroads School in Devlin held a skating party on Thursday to officially celebrate the community rink they and other partners helped fix up in recent months.

"One of Project Sunset's five pillars is community service," youth engagement co-ordinator



Fiona Gallagher told the Times. "And so at the beginning of the school year, we asked the students to brainstorm some ideas on what they wanted they to do for their community service initiative for this year," she explained.

"And one idea that was voted on and won was fixing the rink so that everyone could come out and skate on it—which was awesome.

"It was very student-led," Gallagher added.

The students then planned a day in late November and got some community partners involved, including the Township of La Vallee council and staff, Rainy River Association of Professional Paramedics members Malcolm Daley and Mat Giasson, and some parents.

"The kids came out, fixed the boards, re-nailed things in, put the boards up that you see to patch the holes in the boards that are there now," noted Gallagher.

"They made it look nice, and shovelled it off and cleared it," she added.

The final step—which took many weeks to complete—was the gradual flooding of the rink.

The Chapple, Emo, La Vallee & Alberton Fire & Emergency Services, with the help of OPP Cst. Pete Drouin, have pumped an estimated 80,000 gallons of water to create the ice surface, which now is looking nice and even.

"It's a big rink," Gallagher remarked. "There's been a lot of



Skating instructor Erica Lemelin, a former Crossroads student, showed off a spinning jump last Thursday. She was on hand to give skating tips to the students. —Duane Hicks photos

different pumper trucks coming to fill it."

This all has led up to the official opening last Thursday afternoon.

"Now that the weather is nice enough for the kids to go outside for recess, we've been able to have a skating day," said Gallagher, noting former Crossroads and now Fort High student and skating instructor Erica Lemelin was on hand to help out with the novice skaters.

Beyond usage by Crossroads students, Gallagher stressed the

rink is open and available for the entire community to use.

"So if anybody wants to come out, the shack is open and heated," she noted, adding there are shovels in the shack to clear off the ice surface after a snowfall.

"It's been a couple of years since it's been able to be used," said Gallagher, adding ice skating is a healthy activity for community members, especially youth, so they don't have to stay indoors all winter watching TV.

"Winter's not over at all," she remarked.