

Curling Gets Rocking in Antigonish

by Ryan Van Horne

Some St. Francis Xavier University students have started a School of Rock and it's a hit with kids in the Antigonish area.

For the past two years, Brittany Black and Carolyn Rose, the president and vice-president of the St. F.X. curling club, have been on-ice instructors for an after-school curling program offered to girls aged 11 to 15.

Donalda Mattie, the founder and owner of Turning Point Curling School, was contacted by Antigonish County recreation to start the program. Mattie, also the head coach of the women's team at St. F.X., is the lead instructor while Black and Rose have helped teach the group of 24 girls.

The program, offered through Antigonish



Pictured are the St. F.X. women's curling team, from left: skip Ashley Francis, third Carolyn Rose, second Bailey Lonergan, lead Brittany Black, alternate Sarah MacPhee and coach Donalda Mattie. (Contributed)

County recreation at Highlander Curling Club in St. Andrews, is free of charge thanks to a Thrive

grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness. Students from St. Andrew Junior School, Highland Academy of Learning, L'Ecole acadienne de Pomquet and East Antigonish Education Centre take part.

Rose is hoping there will be funding for a third year, but the after-school program is still up in the air as of press time.

"We kind of have to wait to see if Antigonish County Recreation gets funding for the program," Rose said. "We were lucky enough to get it back (last) winter. They usually find out in late September or October whether they get the funding."

Rose said a lot of the same girls who came out in Year 1 came back last year, which indicates they enjoyed the eight-week program that was offered before Christmas and again afterward.

"They really enjoyed it. They really liked learning something new," Rose said. Interest picked up when they started playing a few ends and once the players started to learn the strategy part of the game, they wanted to do that all the time.

For Rose, the most enjoyable part of the program was watching the kids going at it themselves and not having to ask an instructor what to do.

Rose said she and Black were paid for their work by the County, but she doesn't see it as a part-time job.

"I don't think that mattered," Rose said. "We still would have done it anyway."

For the past two years, Black and Rose also helped lead a resurgence of curling on the campus at St. F.X. They formed a club team that represented the university at the inaugural AUS event last February and again at the national championships.

Mattie said she's thrilled about the comeback curling has made at St. F.X.

"It's a club sport, so we don't get funding, but we're trying to do our own fundraising which is always a challenge," Mattie said.

It's part of a trend she's seeing in the area.

"I see a resurgence in the northern region," said Mattie, pointing to other clubs in New Glasgow and Guysborough that have started programs to attract new members to the rink. **SQ**

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