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Communities in action

Annapolis Royal volunteers raise a cool half million

By PAUL PICKREM

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL — People here and in nearby communities are cooling off this summer in a new swimming pool, thanks to the work of a non-profit group that would not take no for an answer.

The Friends of the Annapolis Pool Society was formed after Annapolis Royal residents struggled to get the town council to take the plunge and commit to replacing the old concrete pool.

"It's unfortunate we had to fight so long and so hard," society member Wendy Abramson said in a recent interview.

"But it was kind of like the story of the little train that could. I love that story."

The group raised \$520,000 of the \$600,000 cost of the project by securing grants from several levels of government, obtaining private donations and organizing a series of fundraisers that even included selling cookies at the local farm market.

A four-lane junior Olympic pool with a large splash pad finally opened in late June, to the delight of Annapolis Royal residents and more than 4,000 people in surrounding communities, who no longer had to travel to Bridgetown or Digby to have a dip in a pool.

Deputy Mayor Phil Roberts said it was a challenge to convince the town council that the project could be successful.

"We found a wide base of community support and pressed ahead," he said. "Most of the people who use the facility are not from the town."

Rion Microys, the group's treasurer, said Annapolis Royal has a theatre, riverside boardwalk, art gallery and playground because people who live here are willing to work hard to get things done.

"Almost everything in this town was made by people who said, 'This needs to happen' and went ahead and did it."

And that determination is not likely to cool down as folks spend more time soaking in the new pool.

A group is making plans for a new skateboard park to be used by young people from the area. It is set to open next spring.

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