

MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER



Congrats Graduates!

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TnT & Snoezelen Room

Thank You Donors!

Congratulations to all of
our 2025 graduates!



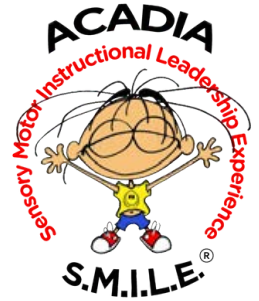
Congratulations Graduates!

We want to extend our deepest congratulations to all of our volunteers that have spent countless hours dedicated to S.M.I.L.E. YOU all make this program a success and we could not do this without you!



Director's Message

Dr. Roxanne Seaman
Professor School of Kinesiology



As we wrap up another incredible year with the Acadia S.M.I.L.E. Program, I am filled with gratitude, pride, and joy reflecting on the many memories, milestones, and moments of growth we've shared together. This year has been nothing short of inspiring - from the energy and enthusiasm of our participants to the commitment and compassion shown by our volunteers, student leaders, and S.M.I.L.E. leadership team.

Throughout the year, our program days were filled with excitement and meaningful experiences. Theme days brought engagement and creativity to the programming. Highlights included our always-popular Athlete Day where our participants and volunteers participated in sport stations that were led by our Acadia varsity athletes!

S.M.I.L.E.'s Got Talent brought out the creativity and confidence in our participants as they took to the stage to sing, dance, and shared poetry and stories. Participants also participated in assessment stations highlighting their fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills.

Beyond the fun, we've also taken thoughtful steps to incorporate educational components grounded in the Quality Participation Framework, helping us to intentionally foster a sense of belonging, autonomy, engagement, challenge, mastery, and meaning for every participant. Our student leaders and volunteers were supported in understanding and applying these constructs, ensuring that each session was not only active and engaging but also empowering.

We extend our deepest thanks to Joan Craig and the Craig Foundation, our Donors of the Day, our outstanding alumni, and our strong supporters who contributed generously through leading events, writing grants, and organizing fundraisers - your contributions play a vital role in the success of S.M.I.L.E. We could not run this program without the combined help and support of our entire community.



A heartfelt thank you goes out to our incredible volunteer instructors, student leaders, and student directors -your time, energy, and passion are the heartbeat of this program. Congratulations to our graduating students! We are so proud of your achievements and excited to see the positive impact you'll continue to make in the world.



We would also like to give a very special thank you to Nikki Matthews, our Program Coordinator, who is transitioning from S.M.I.L.E. as she nears the completion of her Master of Applied Kinesiology degree. Nikki will be pursuing a Master of Occupational Therapy at Dalhousie University this fall, and while we are excited for her next chapter, her incredible commitment, enthusiasm, and deep love for S.M.I.L.E. will be greatly missed.

To our amazing leadership team which includes Andrew Roach, Alexa Urquhart, Courtney London, and Dr. Emily Bremer. Thank you for your unwavering support, collaboration, and vision throughout the year. An extended thank you to James Sanford, whose support at so many levels, makes this programming possible.

We are so proud of the growth we've witnessed - participants trying new activities with confidence, friendships forming, and volunteers gaining valuable experience and perspective. S.M.I.L.E. continues to be a space where everyone belongs and where movement is celebrated as a powerful tool for learning, connection, and joy.

Thank you again to our amazing families, participants, volunteers, and supporters for making this year so successful. Your belief in the mission of S.M.I.L.E. keeps us moving forward with heart and purpose. We can't wait to see what next year brings!

Wishing you a wonderful summer filled with physical activity and adventures!

Take care,

Dr. Roxanne Seaman

Director, Acadia S.M.I.L.E. Program



COLOUR WEEK

FEB. 25 - MARCH 1



Around the World

MARCH 4-8





Research Director

Dr. Emily Bremer

Canada Research Chair in Healthy
Inclusive Communities



First off, congratulations to all our graduating students!

We have had another big semester of research, evaluation, and continuous education within S.M.I.L.E., and I would like to highlight some of this work.

Year-end program evaluations were a huge success with participants completing their assessment stations and having a fun time with their instructors seeing how they progressed this year!



We have been working in partnership with Wellnify.ai, an app-based wellness platform to create additional content for a S.M.I.L.E. adapted physical activity app that we've been working to develop and test. This semester, students in S.M.I.L.E. and Advanced Adapted Physical Activity (a Kinesiology course) created a series of additional adapted fitness, sport, and activity videos to be uploaded to the Wellnify app. The content looks fantastic, and we are very excited to provide you with free access to the app and lots of activities that you can do at home this summer – stay tuned for information on how to download and access the app in the coming month!

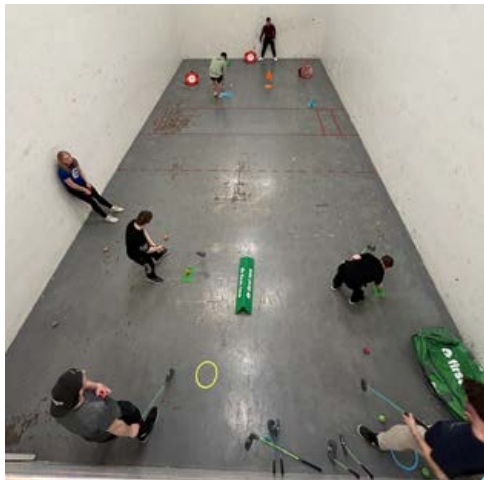


In case you missed it...

We recently published a journal article on the long-term impact of volunteering with S.M.I.L.E. on student educational and career trajectories.

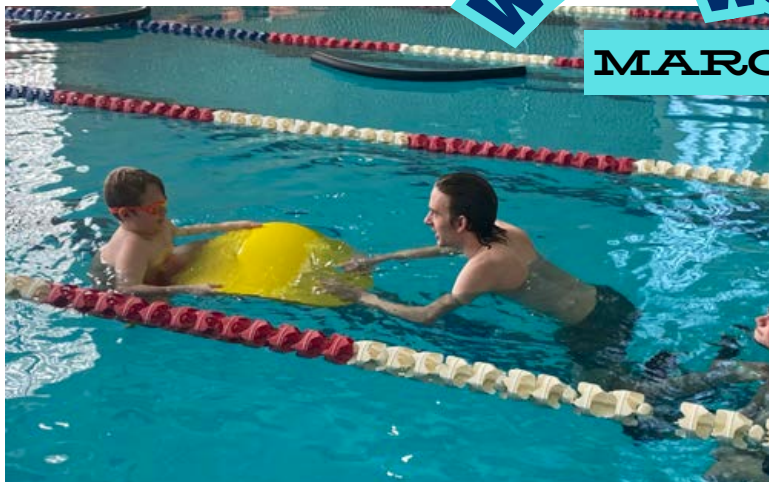
TLDR: S.M.I.L.E. is part of the Acadia experience for our students; they cherish what they learn here; and put their S.M.I.L.E. experience to practice in their careers.

[Click here to see Acadia's coverage of the article.](#)



Winter Wonderland Week

MARCH 14-20

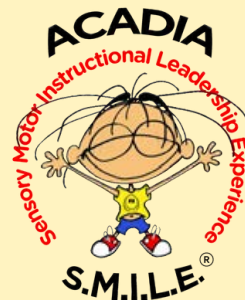


Athlete Week

March 21-27



ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



Dr. Heidi Stanish Volunteer 1990-1992

Dr. Heidi Stanish is a Professor in the Department of Exercise and Health Sciences at University of Massachusetts Boston.

Dr. Stanish's research is in physical activity and fitness promotion among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"S.M.I.L.E. sparked my passion for using physical activity and sport to enhance quality of life among individuals with disabilities and inspired me to pursue a doctorate in adapted physical activity, shaping all of my research and service work."



Bailey Feltmate Volunteer 2017-2020

During his time with S.M.I.L.E., Bailey was an instructor, leader and student director.

Bailey recently retired from being a professional football player in the CFL and is currently pursuing an education in nursing.

"[S.M.I.L.E. was] an amazing experience where I was consistently surrounded by people who pushed me to be the best version of myself each and every day."

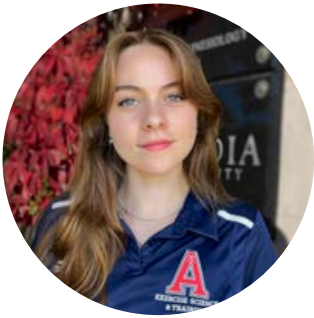


Zachary Dickson Volunteer 2019-2020

Zachary is the Parasport Coordinator at Sport Nova Scotia. In this role, he works with Provincial Sport and Community Organizations across Nova Scotia to help expand and enhance their Parasport programs by creating and overseeing initiatives that strengthen capacity within the system.

"Seeing the joy and excitement of the S.M.I.L.E. participants when they tried new activities and learned new skills is what sticks with me the most from S.M.I.L.E."





Researcher Highlight

Brielle Pyette

2025 Acadia Graduate
S.M.I.L.E. Volunteer



Brielle is a recent graduate from Acadia's Kinesiology program where she has been involved with S.M.I.L.E. Acadia Active Aging, Cardiac Maintenance, Active for Life, Kinderskills, and the Acadia String Orchestra.

Brielle has been paired with her S.M.I.L.E. buddy since second year, but she has known her family since high school.

"It has been incredible to watch her grow as a person and hear how much she loves and benefits from her time at S.M.I.L.E. Some of my specific highlights were my buddy getting into the pool for the first time in second semester of second year, endless dragon hunts with my buddy, and high fives with participants after completing the fitness testing for my research!"

Brielle participated in both the Honours Program, under the supervision of Dr. Emily Bremer, and Exercise Science and Training Practicum at Acadia.

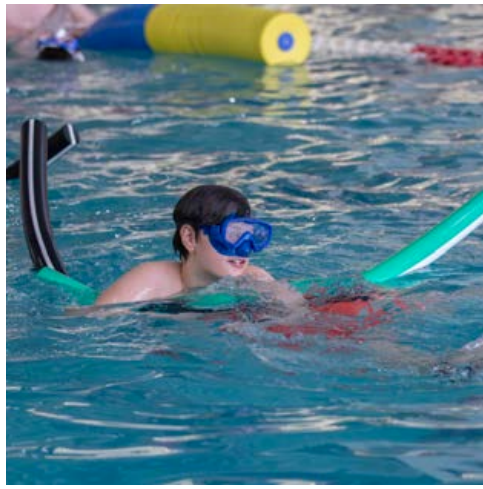


Brielle's Honours research focused on evaluating change in physical fitness of S.M.I.L.E. participants between ages 4-24 over one year of participating in the program.

Data collection involved four physical assessments: a 2-minute walk to assess submaximal cardiovascular endurance, standing long jump for lower body power, grip strength to indicate whole-body strength, and height and weight for body composition. Additionally, the International Fitness Scale was used to provide intrapersonal perspectives of participants' fitness abilities.

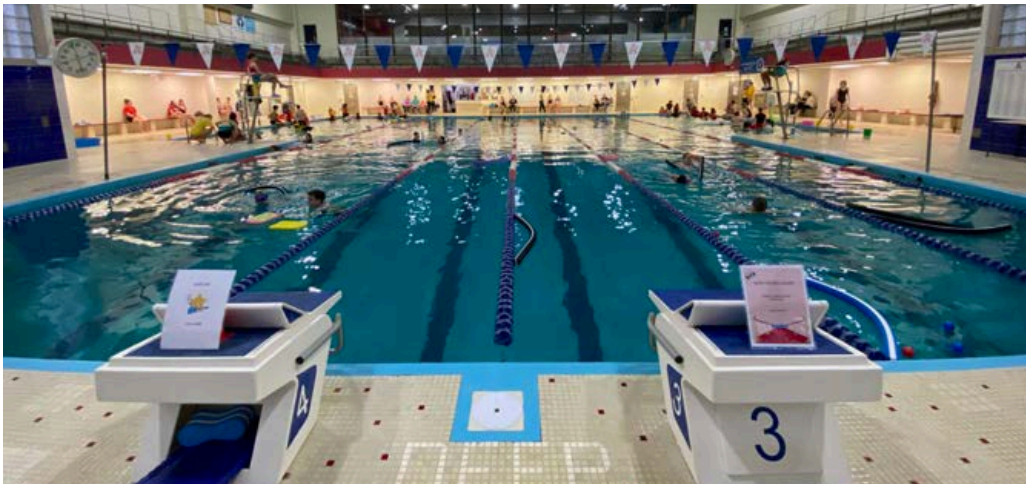
Testing was done during S.M.I.L.E. programming at baseline (last day of S.M.I.L.E. in March 2023), on the first and last day of programming (September 2023 and March 2024), and at follow-up (first day of programming in September 2024).

Brielle's research is also part of a larger longitudinal study being done within the S.M.I.L.E program to provide further insight on the impact of S.M.I.L.E on physical literacy, physical activity, and health for children and youth with disabilities.



SMILE'S Got Talent







SNOEZELEN ROOM PROGRAMMING

21 Sessions
every 2 weeks

This sensory space is popular amongst participants that want a calm atmosphere, while also working on their motor skills.

Our Snoezelen Room was masterfully designed in partnership with House of Kevin (hofk.ca)





Thank You Donors!

A sincere thank you to our Donors of the Day and Donors of the Week in February, March and April. Your continued support ensures the legacy of S.M.I.L.E. will continue strong.

THANK YOU DONORS



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PUB**



Thank you local
businesses and teams
for your continued
support of S.M.I.L.E.

IN LOVING MEMORY



JOHANNA SUTCLIFFE

1981-2025

Johanna will be remembered for her love of
scavenger hunts, arts and crafts, and
playing basketball in the gymnasium.
Johanna will forever be in the hearts of her
S.M.I.L.E. family.