

DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

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SHOOT, SCORE S.M.I.L.E.

Thank you to the Shoot, Score, S.M.I.L.E. team for raising an impressive \$3,100 during the Acadia Axemen hockey game.



Friends of Acadia Football

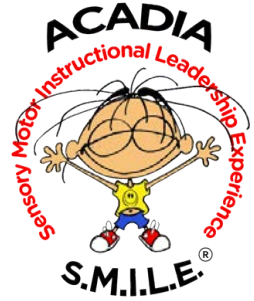


Friends of Acadia Football generously donated \$2,500 to S.M.I.L.E., making a meaningful impact through their continued support.



Director's Message

Dr. Roxanne Seaman
Professor School of Kinesiology



As the fall semester comes to a close, I would like to extend sincere thanks to our participants, families, volunteers, donors, and community partners for their continued support of the S.M.I.L.E. Program. This semester was marked by important transitions and growth that was made possible by the collective commitment of everyone involved in the S.M.I.L.E. community. I would also like to acknowledge the continued support of the Acadia Senior Leadership Team and Acadia Faculty members whose encouragement and collaboration remain essential to the success of the program.

This fall, our Tuesday and Thursday school programming transitioned to ice-based activities, including learn-to-skate, para hockey, hockey, and ringette. Participants demonstrated consistent progress in skating skills, game play, confidence, and engagement. We are grateful to the NHLPA Goals & Dreams Fund for their generous donation of new hockey equipment which played a key role in supporting this programming. In addition to ice-based activities, our Friday night participants had opportunities to engage in expanded fitness centre programming, newly added spin classes, yoga, and Wellnify.ai video activity challenges that allowed participants and instructors to enjoy social time while being physically active.

Across all program days and settings, participants worked toward goals in motor, social, and cognitive domains within a supportive and inclusive environment. Alongside new programming, participants also enjoyed several S.M.I.L.E. favourites, including Snoezelen room programming, a range of sport choices, themed days with scavenger hunts, group games, dancing, music therapy, and talent shows. I would like to acknowledge the exceptional efforts of our Instructors, Leaders, Activity Leaders, Student Directors, Program Coordinators, and Research Director whose thoughtful planning and leadership continue to shape the quality of the program. It has also been a pleasure to reconnect with S.M.I.L.E. alumni and witness the lasting impact of the program. On behalf of the S.M.I.L.E. team, I wish you a safe and enjoyable holiday season. I look forward to another successful year ahead in 2026.



Research Director Update

Dr. Emily Bremer

Canada Research Chair in Healthy Inclusive Communities

Each year, we try to focus on one specific aspect of our S.M.I.L.E. programming that we can better understand or support. For those in Friday night S.M.I.L.E., you will have noticed our shift toward Fitness Focused Friday's, which corresponds to ongoing collaborative work to provide heart health education and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease among our S.M.I.L.E. community. Thank you to our team of Friday Student Directors, Leaders, Instructors, and Participants who have enthusiastically supported this focus! I would also like to thank Dr. Carley O'Neill (Kinesiology), Dr. Sydney Breneol (Nursing), and each of the Acadia nursing students who have helped with this transition.

Did you know that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death globally and that adults experiencing intellectual and developmental disability are at an increased risk of under-diagnosis? Participation in physical activity and improved physical fitness can help to reduce risks.

On **February 13, 2026** we are hosting an event to raise awareness for women's heart health, particularly among women who care for individuals experiencing disability. We invite all caregivers (e.g., parent, grandparent, close friend, etc.) of S.M.I.L.E. participants, across all program days, to attend. Please see the Save the Date and event registration on the next page. The event is free to attend, and we hope to see you there!

Join the virtual S.M.I.L.E. community on Wellnify!

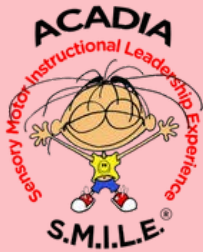
What can I do in the Wellnify app?

- Complete fun, free, physical activity at home, with videos from S.M.I.L.E. volunteers.
- Log activity and movements that you complete outside of the app.
- Participate in challenges.
- Stay active outside of S.M.I.L.E. programming!

Can't scan the QR code? Follow these steps instead:

- Download Wellnify.ai on the App Store or Google Play Store
- Click "Create Account" and follow the prompts
- Click Continue
- Click "Enter ORG ID" box and enter this code: **71TFo**
- Select your program day





ACADIA
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HER HEART MATTERS
ELLE NOUS TIENT À CŒUR

WEAR RED CANADA • FEB 13 FÉV • TLM EN ROUGE

Save the Date

6-8pm Friday, February 13th

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for women worldwide?

Caring for the Caregivers Heart



A Women's Heart and Vascular Health Information Session for those Caregiving to Persons experiencing Disability

- Keynote by Dr. Karen Bouchard, Associate Scientist from the University of Ottawa Heart Institute.
- Optional cardiovascular disease risk factor measurements and light refreshments will be provided.



 **School of Kinesiology at Acadia University**
550 Main Street, Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Registration is **strongly encouraged**, but not required.

To
Register:



OR using the link below:
<https://forms.office.com/r/R3AUi2QT15>

Wear Red Canada:
<https://wearredcanada.ca/>



CANADIAN WOMEN'S
HEART HEALTH CENTRE
CENTRE CANADIEN DE SANTÉ
CARDIAQUE POUR LES FEMMES

NATIONAL
ALLIANCE
NATIONALE

Researcher Highlight

Rayona Silverman
PhD Student



Welcome Rayona to the S.M.I.L.E. Team. Rayona has taken over the role of Program Coordinator while she is completing her PhD under the supervision of Dr. Emily Bremer.

Rayona completed her undergraduate and master's degrees at Queen's University located in Kingston, Ontario from 2019-2025. During her undergraduate degree, she was involved in many things including volunteering and overseeing the campus tours program, intramural sports, and being involved in the Revved Up Gym at Queen's. Alongside her experience volunteering, supervising, and teaching in the Revved Up Gym, Rayona also was a part of the Revved Up Research Lab. In the lab, Rayona completed a fourth year thesis and master's degree exploring sport, disability, and recruitment strategies for persons experiencing disabilities in research spaces.

A message from the S.M.I.L.E. office

What a semester it has been! We started off with a superhero filled programming week, flew the witch brooms to Halloween, and camped our way to the ice rink, before skating into a winter wonderland. Our participants had the opportunity to try out a spin class, skate with Santa, move in the fitness centre, and more. We could not have done all this without the incredible student directors, leaders, and instructors who pave the way forward with each programming date. Most importantly, we could not have done this without YOU! Thank you for participating, supporting, and engaging with S.M.I.L.E.!

Not to fear! We are already hard at work preparing for next term. From adventures in space all the way to Disney dreams and an epic S.M.I.L.E.'s got talent, our team is cooking up some fun, engaging, and exciting new programming experiences for you. Until then, we hope you have a restful and wonderful holiday break.

Sending S.M.I.L.E.'s your way!

FITNESS focused FRIDAYS



The biggest positive change I've seen this semester is how engaged everyone has become in the fitness side of S.M.I.L.E. Participants are so invested in the activities that many don't even realize they've been moving for nearly two hours, it feels natural and fun for them, which is exactly what we hope for on Fitness Focused Friday. I've also been really impressed with our instructors. They've fully embraced the new changes and have done an excellent job making the sessions supportive, energetic, and adaptable. Our instructor team is incredibly strong this year, and they're the major reason why Friday S.M.I.L.E. has been so successful.

- Will, Friday Student Director



Having individuals from different parts of the student body and community has been such a huge addition. We are so thankful for everyone who has been willing to sacrifice their time for everyone at S.M.I.L.E., it allows us to consistently share new opportunities and experiences for all our participants.

- Ryan, Friday Student Director

SATURDAY SMILE.

We added lots of fun new equipment: everyone has been trying out the Zamboni pushers, new hockey gear, and the sleds have been a great motivator to get on the ice and try something new; the tunnel has been a hit in our obstacle course for learning skating skills. In the main gym, our new target toss gives participants a great way to practice aiming and teamwork. We have also introduced new yoga pose and activity prompt sheets to help everybody stretch, relax, and try new skills. Battle ropes, balance beams, and jumping blocks have helped us practice our strength and balance while having fun. We also introduced new parachute games during the last 30 minutes of our Saturday program, which has quickly become a highlight of the week.

- **Nick, Saturday Student Director**



We have had so much fun with the themes this semester! We had an amazing Career/When I Grow Up day. From firefighters leading us through some training and letting us try on their equipment, to chemists making liquid nitrogen ice cream for us to enjoy. Once Halloween rolled around, we knew it was going to be good, but wow, the excitement in the air was amazing! So many creative costumes that we all got to show off during a big parade, such as massive blowup chicken, Mr. Incredible, and some ghostbusters to name a few. We could go on with so many more memories, but one last one we'll mention is on our last programming day, we invited Santa on the ice, and we got a pretty cool opportunity to skate with Santa during his busiest time of the year!

- Maria, Saturday Student Director





Tuesday/Thursday TnT!



During our first S.M.I.L.E. session on the ice, many participants shared that it was their first time skating. If you saw them skate during the last S.M.I.L.E. session of the semester you would have never guessed it! It has been so amazing to watch participants and their instructors build trust and confidence as they improved their skating skills. Participants have developed skills including skating without a pusher, stick handling and manoeuvring their sleds. The participants, instructors and leaders alike have been so eager to come to S.M.I.L.E. to hangout with their new friends, have a blast and learn new skills.

- Meg, TnT Student Director



Each week, we have different theme-specific activities for the participants to try, alongside activities that have become a staple in the new TnT programming. These activities include a group hockey game, bowling, para-hockey games, and an obstacle course in the learn to skate section that includes the new skate-through tunnel which is always a hit. Towards the end of the semester, we saw so many more participants engaging in group activities, which was awesome! As they engaged in these activities, we saw participants gain their confidence on the ice and make connections with volunteers and other participants!

- Aidan, TnT Student Director



The Jack Scholz Snoezelen Room

This semester we have been lucky to have new equipment added to the Snoezelen Room, which has made a big difference in programming and how participants engage in the space. Participants have been liking the variety of different activities and games, especially when we program them to the different theme weeks. Lots of participants have been enjoying equipment like the Gopher pads, which we have been able to program in many ways. Some weeks it's a jumping pad, while some it blends into an obstacle course. All the equipment has been a huge hit and we are excited for more adapted equipment being used next semester!

- Makenna, Snoezelen Student Director





We have been fortunate to receive lots of positive feedback this semester from the schools and community groups that come for weekly sessions. Many groups have shared that these sessions are participants favourite parts of their week and look forward to it in the days leading up. Staff and caregivers love that it is a safe space that participants can go to engage in new activities they might not get a chance to do in their regular routine. The feedback this semester has been amazing, and we can't wait for next semester to start again!

- Parker, Snoezelen Student Director





Program Dates

2026

Tuesdays

-
- January 27
 - February 3
 - February 10

-
- February 24
 - March 3
 - March 10

-
- March 24

-
- April 7

Thursdays

-
- January 29
 - February 5
 - February 12

-
- February 26
 - March 5
 - March 12

-
- March 26

-
- April 9

Fridays

- January 23
 - January 30
 - February 6
-

-
- February 27
 - March 6
 - March 13
 - March 20
 - March 27
-

Saturdays

- January 24
 - January 31
 - February 7
-

-
- February 28
 - March 7
 - March 14
 - March 21
 - March 28
-