

Kids make a splash at George Jeffrey this summer

For water lovers, nothing beats a refreshing dip on a hot summer's day.

Children with special needs will have the opportunity to do just that at George Jeffrey Children's Centre in Thunder Bay. Summer Splash is a recreation program for children aged two to four who access services at the rehabilitation and treatment centre for kids with disabilities. Recreation therapist Theresa Sellers says the program provides the opportunity for social interaction and active play within the pool environment, including organized games and spontaneous frolic.

"The pool is a medium for engaging children," says Theresa.

"There is something very magical, it really draws children."

George Jeffrey has a heated indoor pool for use by the centre's clients and daycare children. The pool is used for both therapy and recreation.

Theresa says this particular summer program, which runs from July 10 to Aug. 21, provides the perfect opportunity to introduce swimming to children who may have some reservations. "For those children who are intimidated by the aquatic environment this

program is a chance to become acclimatized to the water," says Theresa.

"I really believe that in order to promote skill-building in anything we need to create interest."

While this particular program is booked, the pool is available to clients during other times for therapy or recreational use between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. After-hours use is available too. Pool use must be booked with the receptionist by calling the centre at 807-623-4381.

In Ontario, there's emphasis on water from swimming at the cottage to a neighbourhood pool party.

"Water is fabulous for its physical benefits," Louise Kublick, aquatics co-ordinator at Bloorview Kids Rehab, earlier told www.oacrs.com

"Kids with disabilities who don't learn to swim are left out of those physical opportunities and that social opportunity."

Louise's goal is to get children swimming in their community pools and integrating with other kids. Bloorview offers aquatic support services to help make that happen. Visit <http://www.bloorviewmacmillan.on.ca/webpdfs/aqsupport.pdf>