

Belleville EMC

Games for the deaf debut at Sir James Whitney

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BY MICHAEL J BRETHOUR

EMC news - Last week, for the first time ever, Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, hosted the 11th annual Youth Canada Tournament for the Deaf.

Nicoll said the competition is probably one of the biggest events staged by schools for the deaf across the country.

Dozens of students and staff from schools from as far as British Columbia and Alberta, converged on the Belleville facility to compete and show off their skills in academic and athletic fields of competition.

Each of the seven schools participating was allowed to compete with a team of 12 students between the ages of 12 to 21. Of those schools, the ones from outside Ontario bunked up at the school itself.

Jonathan Nicoll, YCTD treasurer/secretary, said the event is a gold mine of experiences for deaf youths. "To have deaf children and teenagers to get together and socialize while learning new skills," he said. "What could be better? Nothing I can think of."

Nicoll said the five-day event allowed students the opportunity to compete in math challenges and a variety of team and individual sporting events. In addition to visual arts competitions, students competed head-to-head in dramatic performances of miming, dramatic and humorous skits and poetry/story telling held on the stage of Centennial Secondary School last Wednesday evening.

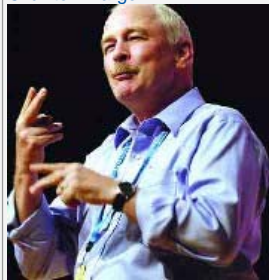
The school also opened the event to local residents, who were treated to a wide array of dramatic performances inside the auditorium that evening. Nicoll said all the live performances were conducted in American Sign Language (ASL).

Having the event at the Belleville school was not just the luck of the draw, Nicoll explained. "When we competed at the last competition in British Columbia, in 2006, we won the bid to hold it here this year," he said. "Schools will bid to hold the event tomorrow (Thursday), similar to the Olympics, at our closing ceremonies."

Nicoll elaborated saying that the YCTD is a huge celebration of learning, sharing, and having fun, which includes a variety of competition areas.

He said the closing ceremonies involved planting a tree on the campus of Sir James Whitney. "All the schools have brought soil from their native school to plant the tree with, it's something very special."

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Dean Walker, Ontario Association of the Deaf executive director, addresses the crowd gathered to watch the dramatic and literary competition of the 11th annual Youth Canada Tournament for the Deaf last week. This portion of the event was held in the auditorium of Centennial Secondary School last Wednesday evening.

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Michael J Brethour, Belleville EMC

Matthew Hilliker, of Robarts School for the Deaf, mimes a hilarious performance entitled The Flirter during last Wednesday evening's dramatic competitions during the five-day Youth Canada Tournament for the Deaf hosted by Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf.

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