

For Adults Only:
Olympia Skating Club – Active for Life
By Maureen Bennie

The Olympia Skating Club, Alberta's first adult-only skating club, formed in February 2014. Based in Calgary, the club aims to offer programming for adults of all ages and levels, providing them with a fun, focused environment tailored to fit their individual goals. A flexible environment is key for adults, allowing them to participate as much or as little that works with their lifestyle and commitments.

Adult programming focuses on motor skills, technical skating skills, artistic development, physical conditioning, and the psychological and social aspects of figure skating. This variety of programming is the foundation to foster high levels of participation and Olympia skaters are doing just that.

The 2014 season is off to a great start with several Olympia skaters having competed in Western Regional Adult Championships (WRAC) in Red Deer, Canadian Nationals in Regina, SK and World's in Oberstdorf, Germany in May. Olympia skaters earned a total of 25 medals in these events - quite an accomplishment!

This new club is guided by expert head coach Monika Bafia. Originally from Poland, Ms. Bafia represented Poland for 22 years in both the Senior Ladies and Ice Dance categories. In 1984, she qualified for the Sarajevo Olympics. She is an Olympic Level Coach Master in Warsaw, Poland, a Skate Canada Coach NCCP Level III and is a highly respected choreographer for ballet companies and skaters of all levels in Canada, USA, Russia and Japan. It is through Ms. Bafia's guidance that Olympia has a well-rounded training program that follows Canada's Active for Life Strategy.

Why have a club just for adults? The program needs of adults differ from that of young people. This sport has a connection to other sports and encourages over-all development through conditioning, ballet, musicality, memory, cardio, balance, body control, and artistry. Targeting these areas can reduce the risk of health issues that can happen in aging. Chronic conditions can disappear or be managed better. Adults can feel motivated in more aspects of their life due to increased energy and physical strength, and apply what they've gained physically and mentally to other things such as volunteering.

Olympia offers ice that is limited to 12 skaters and adults only on the sessions.

Safety is a big issue for older adults so having less skaters on the ice reduces the risk of injury and increases skating confidence. Sometimes it's nice to have a break from children and be in an adult-only environment, working at something just for yourself.

Adults are more likely to return to a sport they have experienced before. With 80 percent of children having skated either in hockey or figure skating, skating may be the right thing to pick up again. It's wonderful to feel part of a group, have a social outlet and develop an identity around skating which can be different things for different people. You can skate solo, take a dance partner or skate in a group number. There is an option for every personality and preference.

Skating is a sport that encourages you to come again and improve. The process is a building one involving memory – you have to remember what you learned at your last session and build on this. If you don't come regularly, you forget what you've learned. Skating lends itself naturally to long term athletic development. When adults compete, perform and participate in skating, they are an inspiration to their family, friends and community.

Olympia is supporting skaters who have transitioned from competing as a youth to adult training and competition, beginner skaters, and those returning to the sport in their later years. The skaters range in age from 22 – 80. Most work and are raising families; some are already grandparents. They compete, take tests, participate in off-ice training, and enjoy staying active. Adult skating has a different vibe because they skate for personal reasons. There is no parent driving them to the rink or someone telling them what they have to do. They are self-motivated and come to this sport to improve and develop in their own way.

This new club is proud to support the unique goals and aspirations of adults. If you think you'd like to come back to skating after years of not doing it, lace up your skates. If you've always wanted to learn how to skate, try it. When you participate as an adult you have nothing to lose and everything to gain – fitness, friendship, and most of all fun!

To learn more about Olympia Skating Club and their skating schedule, visit our website at <http://www.olympiaskatingclub.ca/> Be kept in the loop by liking our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/olympiaskatingclub?ref_type=bookmark . Skating news, tips, competitions and other things of interest to adult skaters are posted throughout the week.