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Gymnastrada festival hits Leduc

Residents of Leduc were treated to a special event at Leduc Composite high school, May 5, with a Gymnastrada Festival in town.

By Oscar Barzilay-Lamers
sports@webcoleduc.com
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Residents of Leduc were treated to a special event at Leduc Composite high school, May 5, with a Gymnastrada Festival in town.

The Gymnastrada, also referred to as the Provincial Rhythmic Gymnastics Festival, showcased 264 gymnasts from across Alberta in a non-competitive event.

This is an annual event that rotates between three of the province's major centres – Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary.

This year a venue couldn't be located in Edmonton, according to Sonya Golly-Jahn, one of the group's organizers who is also on the Alberta board for rhythmic gymnastics, so the group came calling.

She said one reason to bring the event to Leduc was that the sport will be featured in next year's Alberta Winter Games, slated to take place in Leduc in February 2008.

But there was a second reason, as well.

"In hopes some of the local (residents) would have come out and seen it and sparked some interest," said Golly-Jahn.

The early results of their plan appear quite positive.

"The stands were full," she said. "Extra people were sitting on the floor."

Those who did attend were able to see a wide range of participants, both boys and girls as young as four-years-old and an adult group in their mid 60s.

Spectators were also lucky enough to see some very prestigious performers. Five of the teams who came to Leduc will be travelling to the world championships in Austria, July 7 to 14, which is a massive event.

"There are currently over 25,000 participants registered from all over the world."

Golly-Jahn explained the sport isn't always very accessible in non-major centres.

"We'd like to see it grow in smaller communities."

She said often the only time a program will begin in such an instance is if an ex-athlete or coach in one of the major clubs moves to an outlying community and begins a program.

For example, such clubs have sprouted up near Stony Plain and in Lac La Biche.

For more information on the sport can contact the Alpha Rhythmic Gymnastics Club at 1-780-686-2582