

King's MacLennan bringing pop-up playground to Toronto

By Jake Courtepatte

As a two-time Olympic gold medalist, Rosie MacLennan understands the importance of staying active.

Always the first to push for an active lifestyle in kids through diet and exercise initiatives, the King native is teaming up with SpringFree trampolines and Earth Day Canada to bring a pop-up adventure playground to Toronto on Sunday.

"I've been working with SpringFree for quite a while, and when they learned about Earth Day Canada they were really excited about how there's an overlap in their values, to get kids outside and active," said MacLennan. "So this year, we're creating the pop-up adventure playgrounds across Canada, including Toronto."

Dubbed as a "child-friendly space designed to stimulate imaginative, unstructured outdoor play," the event at Trinity-Bellwoods Park in Toronto will be hosted by MacLennan, who will be on-hand for a meet-and-greet and to sign autographs.

"It's a great way to engage kids with natural materials, and play structures, and just use their imagination in being outside and being active," said MacLennan.

Moving away from the traditional playground structures of monkey bars and slides, MacLennan is bringing the "safer, more natural" playground setting to cities across Canada, where she hopes they will be implemented on a permanent basis.

"I think it's great for kids to have a variety," said MacLennan. "I think it's a great way to introduce them to new activities, and to improve their physical literacy. So anytime that you can get them outside and using their imagination, to build, to explore, to create something, is amazing."

Fittingly, as one of the greatest trampolinists of her generation, trampolines will be available thanks to MacLennan's sponsorship with SpringFree.

"I may be a little biased," joked MacLennan. "But they're a great way to get the family together."

The adventure playground, a haven for unrestricted play and an absence of rigid play structures that have become popular as of late, often come equipped with trampolines, according to MacLennan.

"They're actually fairly common. It's a space designed for kids, and kids love trampolines, so it's a great way to get them active and give them some variety."

"This weekend there's going to be everything from face-painting, to child art, do-it-yourself gardening, and of course, the trampolines."

MacLennan called the trampoline "another tool" kids can use to enhance their physical literacy.

"Obviously one of the fundamental physical skills is jumping, and it's something with a lot of variation. After running around playing a game, or playing in the dirt, getting on a trampoline is just something else they can add to that list to keep them engaged." MacLennan, and her gold medals, will be on-hand at 11 a.m.