



October 29, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health-conscious focus fosters wellness industry in Smiths Falls

The Town of Smiths Falls is promoting its reputation as an active community, and a health-conscious approach that has led to robust growth in health-related industries. Fostering health and wellness is more than just lip-service in Smiths Falls, where municipal staff and Council work diligently to support wellness-related businesses, events and infrastructure.

Smiths Falls' Manager of Economic Development, Jennifer Miller, explained it's Smiths Falls' reputation as an active community with a focus on healthy living that has inspired so many health-related businesses to settle in Smiths Falls.

"The growth of the health and wellness industry in Smiths Falls isn't by accident, it's thanks to the town's commitment to providing the infrastructure and opportunities to support the industry," Miller said.

The appeal of Smiths Falls as a centre for both healthy living and innovation has had profound impacts on economic development, and the health industry is one of Smiths Falls largest industry employers.

One Smiths Falls health and wellness business that uses an innovative business model is **Rideau Community Health Services (RCHS)**, a fully accredited Community Health Centre that has been delivering health and social services to the region since 1974. In 2006, a physician shortage in Smiths Falls and area prompted the community to establish the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre, using a community-governed model.

RCCHS Executive Director, Peter McKenna, pointed out the Community Health Centre model offers an innovative approach to health care, and is a model the town of Smiths Falls specifically chose for their community.

“There are only one hundred community health centres in Ontario, and most are in cities like Toronto and Ottawa; it’s fairly unusual to have one in a community like Smiths Falls,” McKenna explained.

According to McKenna, under the RCCHS model, physicians are employees, and are paid regardless of how many patients they see in a day. This gives patients the time they need with their physician, whether it’s five minutes or 30 minutes. One of the Community Health Centre’s key goals is to provide patients with the education and skills that will allow them to take responsibility for their own healthcare.

“A Community Health Care Centre will take care of you when you’re not well, but our whole goal is to promote your health and keep you healthy,” McKenna said.

The growth of the community’s healthy lifestyle is also reflected in an increase of health and fitness related services and businesses. The recent relocation and expansion of the wellness centre, **Optimum Health** (formerly Restorative Health), is evidence of the resulting impact on economic development.

Optimum Health owner, Dr. Robert Rodine, has expanded his chiropractic business to create a wellness centre that includes massage therapy, chiropractic care, and fitness. Optimum Health’s new location offers more than 3,400 square feet of space, and full accessibility.

Rodine explained that Smiths Falls’ focus on healthy living is not only evident in the growing number of businesses who are choosing to settle in town, but can also be seen in the community as a whole.

“There’s been a big focus on health in the last few years in Smiths Falls; we’ve seen the growth and development of the healthy living festival, charity events, sports opportunities, and a huge increase in fitness facilities,” Rodine said, “At Optimum Health, we’re hoping to grow along with our community.”

Historically, Smiths Falls has been on the cutting-edge of health and wellness for more than 30 years. As home to the longest-running triathlon in Canada, the Smiths Falls community has been supporting the benefits of physical activity for decades.

Today, Smiths Falls’ focus on health and wellness can be seen everywhere from its state-of-the-art recreational facilities to its world-class hospital, medical clinics, hiking trails, and abundance of health-related professionals.

The **Smiths Falls Memorial Community Centre** is a centerpiece for the town's commitment to promoting healthy living, featuring a 200-metre indoor walking track and two ice surfaces with one being NHL-size. Other municipal recreational facilities include tennis/pickle ball courts, a skateboard park, splash pad, and the **Gerry Lowe Rink**, an outdoor rink that doubles as a basketball area during the summer months.

A senior activity centre featuring an outdoor lawn bowling area focuses on maintaining activity levels at all stages of life. A network of walking and cycling trails, as well as a large, fenced dog park provide ample opportunities for outdoor recreation for two-or-four-legged species.

Health-related events like fundraising runs and walks are also commonplace in Smiths Falls, where the pinnacle of all healthy events, the **Healthy Living Festival**, is hosted each June by the Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association. The Healthy Living Festival is a free, family-centred event focused on healthy living, offering information and activities to help visitors and residents learn more about how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

When it comes to location, Smiths Falls has the best of the best for outdoor activities. Smiths Falls is situated at the heart of the **Rideau Canal**, Canada's longest aquatic playground and UNESCO World Heritage Site, and sits at the head of the **Cataraqui Trail**. **The Rideau Trail**, a 387-kilometre network of trails running between Kingston and Ottawa, also passes through town.

Smiths Falls' Mayor, Shawn Pankow, explained that while Smiths Falls is a beautiful town that inspires and encourages physical activity, that there is so much more about healthy living that can be found within the community.

"The people who live in our community like to get out and run, walk, hike, cycle and swim, and we're in the best spot in Eastern Ontario to do so," Pankow said, "It's the community's approach to embracing and supporting everything to do with healthy living that helps draw people here to be active, and encourages businesses to open and serve Smiths Falls and surrounding communities."

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