

Boy inspires eco-friendly changes at Windermere pool

Jacob Rizzuto behind shift in attitude

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Christina Abboud, with her son Jacob Rizzuto. Marie-France Coallier
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Windermere community pool is going green - and it's got nothing to do with algae. A lot of it has to do with 10-year-old Jacob Rizzuto, a student at St. Paul elementary school, who took part in a recycling project at the school a couple of years ago, and was the inspiration his mother, Christina Abboud, needed to bring about eco-changes at the community pool's snack bar. "Jacob began to pick things out of the garbage at home and to educate the rest of our family on the do's and don'ts of recycling," Abboud, coordinator of the canteen at the pool, said last week.

"He was concerned that as a member of Windermere Pool, there was no program in place - we didn't even have a blue box at the time." Two big recycling bins were brought in and last year, Abboud met up with Julia Mackiewicz, one of the owners of Go Green In Stages (GoGreenInStages.com), an environmental products retailer, who was joining the community pool. "And so the birth of our Green Team project began," Abboud said. "The project focuses on educating and helping members of the pool on the little steps they can take to make a big difference in our world." This summer, bottled water is no longer for sale at the canteen and a new water fountain has been installed to encourage the use of tap water and reusable bottles, which are sold at the canteen. As well, plastic plates and utensils have been replaced with compostable tableware made from sustainable materials such as sugar cane fibre and corn or potato starches. As well, two non-toxic hand sanitizers have been installed at the canteen and non-toxic and bio cleaners are used at the canteen and the bathrooms. "We wanted to protect the kids that work in the canteen by using safe eco-friendly cleaning products to keep our canteen clean and green," Abboud said. The Green team, made up of parent volunteers, will be offering a Green tip of the Day to their fellow members at the pool and with the support of the city, plans to increase recycling rates on site. "We want to encourage our members to recycle and be more aware of landfill issues," said Green Team member Melanie Richter. "We also plan to develop eco-minded programs and events which can include the kids at the pool" For his part, Jacob, who is going into Grade 5, said he was proud of what has been accomplished at the pool. "I'm happy with the changes," he said. "I hope all the other pools will do the same." Windermere Aquatic Club president Lynn Houston said the changes have responded to a grassroots demand. "Our members, especially our children - together with the city of Beaconsfield - have encouraged the Windermere Aquatic Club to go green and reduce our carbon footprint," she said. As for Abboud, she credits the school and her son with starting a chain of events that will make their small part of the world greener. "Imagine, one great school pilot program, one conscientious kid and look where we have come," she said.

