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TOP STORY

Trivia test sharpens minds, builds connections

By Barb Aguiar

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This is Shirley Ericson's third trip to the Canadian Trivia Challenge Senior's Sessions. The former Alberta resident says that helped her to know where the Caesar cocktail was invented.

Barb Aguiar photo

By BARB AGUIAR

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While it's not unusual to hear children laughing in a park, last week it was the old-timers cheering and laughing at the Gellatly Nut Farm Regional Park during the Canadian Trivia Challenge Seniors Sessions.

It's the third year for the event, which invites local retirement home residents to come to the park to test their knowledge of all things Canadian.

But while the teams were puzzling over questions such as what KLO stands for, organizers had questions of their own.

"The big question is, how do people use our parks and how can we get different user groups to come out?" said Rose Maunder, event planner for Regional Parks.

Trivia is a popular activity in retirement homes as a game of skill that gives players the opportunity to engage both socially and intellectually. The mental stimulation can help cognitive health, the ability to think clearly, learn and remember.

Not to mention, many players get a rush when they get an answer correct.

For older adults, trivia is not only the opportunity to learn new information, but also to tap into decades of knowledge.

With many local retirement homes holding trivia nights, it seemed like a good idea to bring the together to play in our parks, said Maunder.

"Not everybody can climb a mountain, not everyone is running up and down trails, but that doesn't mean you can't come out to enjoy parks and have a great day," she pointed out.

This year, teams from four Central Okanagan retirement homes, each team in matching red and white hats, showed up with game on. Some brought along a cheering squad. Another used foam fingers to encourage their team.

As staff read out the questions, team members put their heads together, coming up with possible answers through three rounds of questions, covering history, geography and politics. The second round touched on sports and leisure and the final round tested their knowledge on entertainment.

So where was the Caesar cocktail was invented? Which is the theme music from the Littlest Hobo television show? Name the four mayors of the Central Okanagan.

The Westwood Retirement Resort team has been coming to the Canadian Trivia Challenge since it began three years ago.

"They play a lot of trivia at Westwood," said Christie Hughes. "It's just good, healthy competition."

Every spring they start studying up on Canadian history to prepare for the challenge, Hughes said.

Marilyn Armstrong, from Team Dorchester, was playing for the first time, relying on her good luck charm. Snuggled up on her lap was Diva, a deaf 12-year-old Pomeranian who was serving as team mascot.

“She knew all of the answers,” Armstrong said with a twinkle in her eye. “She was whispering them to me.”

Armstrong enjoys the social aspect of team play, as well as testing her memory.

“It took me a little while to get the Littlest Hobo,” she admitted.

Shirley Erickson, who lives at Westwood, has been to all three challenges.

“It’s a fine get-together and you learn something about your country,” she said.

Erickson is originally from Alberta, which she explained is how she knew where the Caesar was invented (Calgary).

Along with trivia, Erickson loves crossword puzzles, although she says they are becoming more of a challenge as her eyesight is failing. She used to try to complete the New York Times crossword puzzle on Saturday, although she doesn’t do it now because it’s become so frustrating.

Erickson watches Jeopardy all the time. “I miss Alex Trebek,” she said.

Betty Westfall was part of the team from Northwood, the reigning champions from last year. “We play around with this all year,” she said. “The trivia challenge keeps you sharp.”

For Westfall, playing trivia is about meeting people, working together and the competition itself. She is a retired teacher who worked in Alberta, B.C. and Australia teaching from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The team also knew the answer to where the Caesar had been invented because they had recently talked about it.

The competition was fierce, but Missionwood Retirement Resort, first-timers at the challenge, came out on top and took home a framed certificate to display and water bottles for team members.

Although Northwood didn’t repeat as the champions this year, the team had fun and received bubble guns as a consolation prize.

When asked if there would be a big bubble fight back at Northwood, Westfall replied, “I think we’re going to warm up first.”