

## **Magic under the Stars**

On Saturday January 21, 2012, a large group of volunteers, young and old, hosted the second Skating under the Stars at Schmidt Park in Ayr. Unfortunately, this event was not well reported but it is certainly an event of note. It is another example of the many good news stories that are occurring in the Township. This was a remarkable event for a number of reasons. Certainly the weather has not been the most cooperative for producing a large scale outdoor public ice skating surface. The date of January 21, 2012 was selected as the date for the event, with full knowledge and expectation that we might have to move the date. However, as if Mother Nature was hoping for a skating event herself, the weather conditions appeared to be just right for the event to proceed. That's when the volunteer team had to get to work. The ice at Schmidt Park had already been built and rebuilt on at least two occasions. This winter has had a split personality and has not made it easy to keep ice. However, the ice volunteers, led by Kevin Clancy, were determined to work with the weather forecast and get the ice ready for the Saturday evening event. In a matter of a few days the team was able to put together two large ice pads that would allow for hockey playing and general skating during the event. Some volunteers worked from 11:00pm Thursday evening to 5:00am the following morning to get the ice ready. Some also took time away from their work on Friday to get the two ice rinks ready for the Saturday night event. But that is only part of the story. The Township, working with Lindsey Pickering and her volunteers, were able to get the rest of the event together for another successful Skating under the Stars evening. Lindsey and her crew have now put together two successive events and each has been very well attended and successful. With music and hot chocolate, and other donations from the community, the event was clearly well received as confirmed by the strong attendance.

This event, along with our long running and successful Fresh Ayr Festival, is a classic example of how the Township, working collaboratively with community groups, can help bring about positive change in the community. The Township cannot always take the lead and organize and put on an event like this. But we can certainly look at the resources we have available and act as a facilitator or catalyst to work with community volunteers to provide positive activities in our community. While the weather has not been the most cooperative this winter, we know from last years' experience that outdoor rinks are very well attended by the community. Where there are volunteers that are prepared to put in the required time, then an outdoor rink is something that could be considered throughout the parks in the Township.

But if outdoor rinks are not your thing, and you have some other ideas or concepts for community involvement, or would like to get involved with some existing events like the Fresh Ayr Festival, then just contact Michelle Poissant at the Township office. You can never have enough volunteers in the community. We need to ensure that our facilities, including our parks, sports fields and arenas, are used to their fullest. I often use a line that ghost towns have buildings too. Where we do nothing with our parks and facilities, then we are no different than a ghost town. The Township needs to remain involved to encourage and develop collaborative relationships. When people are engaged in activities in our community, using our facilities, then we become the active and vibrant community that we should be. That is positive for the health and well-being of our community and our citizens.

So to all the volunteers that took the time out of their schedules to help make the Skating under the Stars event happen, thank you. We are a better community for your efforts, and we look forward to next year's event.

Rob Deutschmann,  
Mayor, North Dumfries Township