

PADDLE POWER

BY CONNOR CURSON

“LET’S GO TO the lake!” And why not? Most kids love water. With many lakes and the Bow River at our doorstep, it is time to try kayaking and canoeing.

Paddle sports offer core body strength, fitness, balance, coordination, focus, and respect for the natural environment. From gliding across Glenmore Reservoir to ripping up the waves on the Bow or the Kananaskis Rivers, there is water nearby for every level.

Mastering whitewater requires a bit more courage and determination; hence, the level of satisfaction is greater once a paddler masters the basics. Because there is always another river feature to conquer or another trick to master, the learning curve continues without a chance for boredom to set in. Kids often progress more quickly than adults because their low centre of gravity and their light weight allow them to float over swirly eddy lines and currents with balance and ease. Best of all, kayaking provides a great

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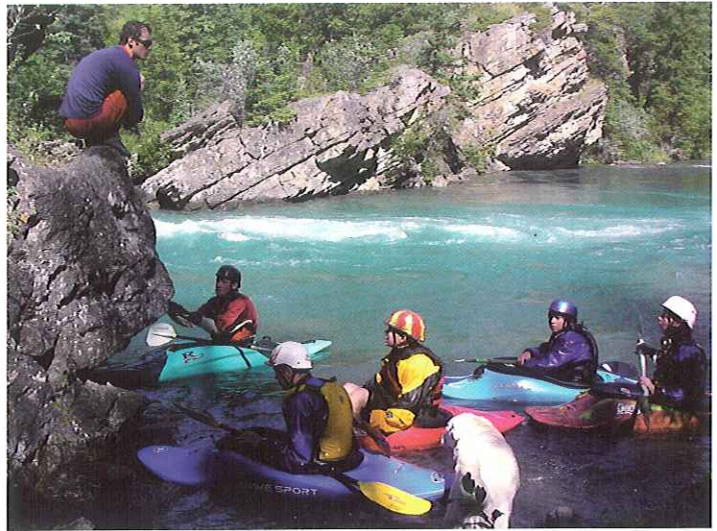
opportunity for child and parent to learn and participate together. But don’t be surprised when your child is spinning 360s on a wave before you’ve learned to keep your boat straight.

Certified instructors will ensure an appropriate environment and a gradual progression from flatwater to small whitewater and beyond. Kids acquire the skills and safety knowledge they need to negotiate whitewater.

Whether paddlers are interested in exploring Calgary’s world-class rivers and lakes on a recreational basis or training in competitive disciplines, proficiency in any paddle sport commonly leads to growth in self-confidence and fitness. Competitive programs for youth also provide opportunities to travel across Alberta, North America, and around the world relatively early in an athlete’s sport development.

In Calgary, the Calgary Canoe Club (CCC) (www.calgarycanoeclub.com or Lynda at 403-246-5757) offers year-round and summer programs in the competitive Olympic sport of flatwater Sprint Canoeing and Kayaking. Competitive programs offer opportunities to compete in the Western Canada Summer Games and Canada Summer Games.

For those who crave the variety and excitement of whitewater, Waterwerks Kayak Club (WKC) (www.waterwerks.ca or Lynn at 403-254-0627) provides basic instruction plus winter pool sessions where you can perfect your strokes and kayak roll. Youth may train in the Olympic sport of Whitewater Slalom kayaking, which opens up an opportunity to compete at the Alberta Summer Games and beyond. WKC membership includes access to Alberta Whitewater Association programming, including outstanding youth programs in Whitewater Slalom, Freestyle kayaking, and river running, as well as whitewater safety/river rescue courses for self-development or certification. ■



Paddling sports are a great way to get your kids fit and active.