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EGG FARMERS ROCKS & RINGS FINDS NEW WAYS TO BUILD PARTICIPATION DURING PANDEMIC

When the dictionary folks announce the “2020 Word of the Year,” it’s probably a safe bet that it will be something like “pandemic” or “COVID” or “social distancing.”

But anybody who was trying to run a business through this uncertain time would probably vote for a different word: “pivot.”

As more and more restrictions were implemented, companies everywhere needed to adjust their business offerings and tailor them to a locked-down society. Restaurants switched to take-out only, alcohol companies started producing hand-sanitizer, and everything from fitness classes to guitar lessons moved online.

Egg Farmers Rock & Rings, presented by *Curling Canada*, a popular program that introduces curling to elementary school students, was no exception, and needed to re-jig its model.

“We pivoted our program this year because our instructors couldn’t go into a lot of the facilities,” said Abbie Darnley, Director of Operations and Events for Rock Solid Productions — the company that created Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings.

Normally, a Rocks & Rings instructor would visit a school and run curling-related activities in the standard phys-ed classes for the day. Using rolling “rocks” and vinyl mats for houses, students learned the basics of curling, along with some terminology and how to keep score. Due to COVID-19, many schools have banned outside visitors, and others have moved the majority of the learning online.

“We were going to start a new classroom curriculum program already to complement the gym program,” said Darnley. “When COVID hit, it became a priority because we couldn’t go into the schools, and a lot of provinces were doing a lot of their learning online. Our goal was to provide the material to get our curling stuff into the curriculum, in a year when we weren’t going to be able to get into the schools ourselves.”

“Rock Solid Productions recognized a need,” added Brodie Bazinet, Manager of the Curling Canada Foundation, which helps fund Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings. “They came up with an innovative program to meet that need, and support our educators when the elementary school system was grappling with how to handle the impacts of COVID on both virtual schooling platforms and in the classroom.”

The new classroom program offers curling-related activities tied into traditional subjects such as math, science and geography. Activities also include curling puzzles, word-searches and drawings.

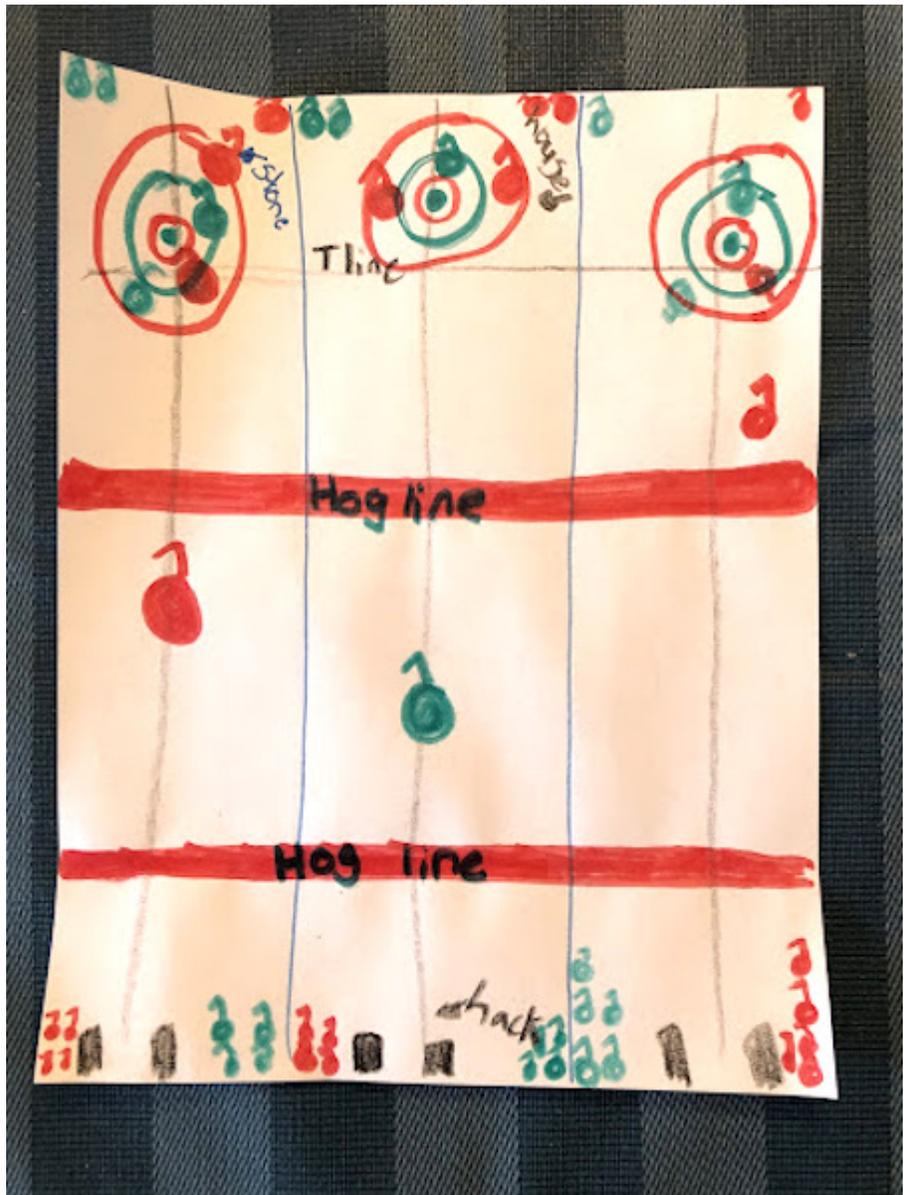
“We wanted to make sure that kids still had access to curling,” said Darnley, “even if it was going to look a bit different this year.”

So far, more than 950 teachers have registered for access to the program, which (based on the numbers they provided) means that roughly 80,000 students will have access to the classroom program.

“Teachers are loving it. It’s something different, exciting new. It’s aligned with the curriculum they have to teach anyway,” said Darnley. “It’s designed that they can do it in units to mix it in here and there, or they can do it all in a week and have curling in all the classes.”

Unlike the traditional Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings program, this version doesn’t require a physical presence. Teachers can download the curriculum from anywhere. They also have the option to arrange a rental of the equipment, so they can run their own Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings-inspired gym classes.

“We’ve been able to reach some really remote places with these programs, which is great for them; in Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, and small towns all over Canada, and it’s great for curling because it gets



Even if they’re not in schools, students are being encouraged to learn about curling thanks to new programs being offered by Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings.

more kids exposed to the sport,” said Darnley. “We got off to a great start, and our long term goal is to build on it. Hopefully next year, we can go back to our regular Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings with instructors, but with the classroom offerings, we can expand on that and make them complement each other.”



“One of the most exciting aspects of Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings In the Classroom is that it is a free resource to all elementary educators across Canada,” added Bazinet. “Removing barriers such as cost and equipment ensures that every school can have equal access. It also therefore offers the resources to a more diverse representation of young Canadians, which is an ongoing priority for our sport.

Once the pandemic is over, Egg Farmers Rocks & Rings will return to school gymnasiums across Canada.

“Curling Canada’s investment in this program is only made possible thanks to the

generosity of the Canada-wide curling community,” noted Bazinet. “Through our philanthropic program and our partnership with Rock Solid Productions, we are continuing to introduce the sport of curling to students who may not otherwise have the opportunity. It has a meaningful and direct impact on our youth curling programs, on the ice and in the classroom.”



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