

Rainbow Griffins RFC launches Canada's first 2SLGBTQ+ youth rugby program funded by Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities

Rainbow Griffins Juniors will be open to all 2SLGBTQ+ youth aged 13-17 and will run for 8 weeks from July to August 2022 in Downtown Toronto.

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, June 9, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Rainbow Griffins RFC advances its mission to develop the sport of rugby for 2SLGBTQ+ Torontonians with the establishment of Rainbow Griffins Juniors which will cater to queer youth in the city ages 13 to 17. The inaugural program, funded by Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities (Jumpstart), aims to introduce the sport over eight (8)



The Rainbow Griffins Rugby Football Club Seniors Team

weeks from July 6th to August 24th, 2022. “We are extremely proud of our progress, for a new club our growth has been astounding,” said Ian Royer, club Co-founder and President. “The Juniors Program has been one of my dreams because I believe that this sport, especially with the openness and support for 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion by our governing bodies and clubs, can positively change the life of any queer person, especially queer youth.”

“

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Jamie Lourenco, club Vice-President

Understanding the importance of sport for the health and well-being of kids, Jumpstart is a national charity dedicated to removing financial barriers so that kids across Canada have equal access to sport and play. “At Jumpstart, we believe that all kids, regardless of their gender identity or expression, should have the chance to play,” said Scott

Fraser, President of Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities. “We are proud to partner with Rainbow Griffins RFC in launching the first-ever 2SLGBTQIA+ rugby program for Canadian youth in an effort to create more opportunities where all kids can be included.”

The club will be partnering with Toronto Inner City Rugby Foundation (TIRF Rugby), Canada's only rugby-centred sport-for-development organization. TIRF will be supporting the delivery of the eight-week program. "We are thrilled to be able to work in partnership with The Griffins to further advance creating safe, supportive spaces where young people can discover themselves through sport," said Amanda Neale-Robinson, executive director of Toronto Inner-City Rugby Foundation. "As a values-based sport, rugby is uniquely positioned to reinforce those qualities and values that not only build character but also build healthy vibrant communities."

Gilbert Rugby Canada has also committed to supporting this program, and the club will be working closely with the Rainbow Griffins to make equipment for all participants affordable, and when needed free. "At Gilbert, we are proud to support rugby in Canada, for all Canadians, but especially young people who face barriers to participating," said Managing Partner Leigh Tynan "Rugby is truly everyone's game, and we see every day the amazing places you can go in life with a rugby ball in your hand. Queer youth face so many challenges in participating in sports, and we are committed to working to eliminate these barriers. We are excited to partner with the Rainbow Griffins Football Club Youth Program to bring the community of rugby to Queer youth in Toronto"



Ian Royer - President, Shannon Doll - Assistant Coach Snrs, Shoshauna Gauvin - Head Coach, Jamie Lourenco - Vice President

A vertical flyer with a rainbow gradient background. At the top is a logo featuring a griffin with a rainbow mane. Below the logo, the text reads "RAINBOW GRIFFINS RUGBY JUNIORS" in bold black letters, followed by "Registration Open" in a script font. The website "www.rainbowgriffinsrffc.ca" is listed. Below that, it says "Open to all 2SLGBTQ+ Youth Ages 13 to 17 No Experience Required". There are two columns of text: "Wednesday Nights 6:30pm to 8:30 pm at Winchester Park" and "Contact \$200 Non-Contact \$100 Financial Aid Available". A Gilbert rugby ball logo is centered between these columns. At the bottom, it says "Kick Off July 6th to August 24th, 2022" and "Email Nate@RainbowGriffinsRFFC.ca for more". Three logos are at the bottom: "SUPPORTED BY Jumpstart Bon départ", "Ontario", and "TIRF RUGBY".

Rainbow Griffins Rugby Football Club Juniors Program Flyer

Established in October 2021, the club has delivered Mixed Ability rugby over the last 9 months and has attracted 46 new active players and over 65 supporters from across Canada. It has also

invested in the development of new rugby coaches, with their head and assistant coach gaining Level 2, World Rugby coaching certification, and it also plans to fund 3 of its members to achieve level 1 World Rugby refereeing certification. During the last 5 months, several parents from the community, especially parents of trans-youth have reached out seeking to enroll with the club. Recognizing the need to expand their mandate, the board of the club applied to Jumpstart for funding. "I am excited about the all-new Rainbow Griffin's Juniors' program," said Jamie Lourenco, club Vice-President. "We have an exciting opportunity to challenge the status quo in the world of sport for youngsters finding their place in the world. For kids who need a family, an outlet, a community or even a sense of belonging, the Rainbow Griffin's Juniors' program will do all that and more."

This program is the first of its kind in Canada and for a member club of International Gay Rugby (IGR), the global membership organization for 2SGLBTQ+ inclusive rugby clubs. "The start of a junior team within an IGR club is unprecedented," said Bhuttu Matthews, Vice-Chair of IGR. "The leadership of Toronto's Rainbow Griffins RFC, especially Ian Royer, have done a marvellous job in expanding the reach of gay and inclusive clubs to youth. Rugby is for everyone. Only by normalizing the sport for all youth will the generational trauma of bullying, homophobia, and transphobia be eradicated. IGR looks forward to the creation of more such teams within our clubs."

Dr. Lauren Wolman, PhD., from the Board of Directors of Rugby Canada, lent her support to the initiative saying, "Sports participation has so many physical, psychological, and social benefits to participation, however, not all sports environments are inclusive and safe, particularly for equity-deserving groups. It is so amazing to see a program that is designed by and for members of the 2SLGBTQ community, which will not only grow the game in Canada but provide opportunities for children and youth to gain benefits of sports participation and development."

Myles Spencer, CEO of Rugby Ontario also congratulated the club saying, "On behalf of Rugby Ontario, I'd like to congratulate the Rainbow Griffins RFC as they launch this exciting new youth rugby program. This new initiative aligns with our vision of "Rugby for All" and speaks to our commitment to making rugby one of the most appealing, accessible and inclusive sports in Ontario. With the Rainbow Griffins having only joined the Rugby Ontario membership in late 2021, we are so pleased to see this collaboration and partnership with Toronto Inner City Rugby Foundation as they work together to bring rugby to youth within the 2SLGBTQ+ community."

The program runs from July 6th, 2022 on Wednesdays from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Winchester Park Interested parties can [join the seniors and juniors program](#) by visiting the club's website www.rainbowgriffinsrfc.ca or can reach out to our Director of Youth Nate Ives at nate@rainbowgriffinsrfc.ca. Financial aid is available for all potential players under the discretion of the board.

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