



MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Amherst's new active living co-ordinator excited to take on the role

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Dave Simpson, the Town of Amherst's new active living co-ordinator, can't wait to get the community moving.

"I've always been interested in active living," Simpson said a couple of days after he took up his duties on Jan. 31, 2023.

"My whole life, that's what it's been. I look forward to helping youth, people my age and older folks become more active. My biggest challenge will be to convince people to do what they already know, which is being active is the



DAVE SIMPSON IS THE TOWN OF AMHERST'S NEW ACTIVE LIVING CO-ORDINATOR. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)

best thing for your health and the health of those around you."

When Simpson says being active has been his "whole life," he isn't kidding. Raised in the multi-cultural community of North York, Ont. – he lived 15 minutes away from the CN Tower and the Skydome – his mother got him involved in soccer when he was just three years old.





“My dad has a video of me from then,” he said, as he chuckled at the memory. “I was playing defence, but all I was really doing was picking dandelions.”

The competitive spirit, however, soon caught up with him.

“My brother was two and a half years older than me, but I wanted to do what he was doing,” he recalled.

That resulted in him playing with kids older than himself, first in house league, then on more competitive teams.

Growing up in the multi-cultural society also made him curious about the different cultures of the world. Soccer helped him satisfy that curiosity.

When he was 14, he became a member of a soccer team that represented the Province of Ontario in various competitions. A year later, he became a member of the U15 and U17 Canadian national soccer teams, which took him to Germany and many other locations. In all, he spent three years on the Canadian national team.

At the Wales International Soccer Tournament, known as The Ian Rush, he set a goal scoring record at the age of 15. He scored 16 goals in eight games.

He was also being scouted by Manchester United, Liverpool, Southampton, Tottenham and Blackburn.

“I didn’t even know what scouting was,” he recalled. “I was scared, all these grown people getting in a huddle and negotiating who would take me on trial.

“At the time, I was playing the game for the love of the game. I knew nothing about professional sports. I wasn’t even watching professional soccer.”

In the end, it was Southampton who gave him a shot.

“I got injured, but they told me they would have taken me on if I hadn’t of been injured,” Simpson said. “I think it was a good thing that I did get injured because at the age of 15, I don’t think I was ready, mentally, to leave home.”

Two years later, he turned professional when VfB Stuttgart offered him a position.

“My mom had the guts, as long as my education was taken care of, to say OK, I could go,” Simpson recalled. “I finished my high school in Germany.”





As a professional, he played in Belgium, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Thailand before retiring in 2012 at the age of 28 because of a rare eye condition known as Stargardt Eye Disease.

“I had trouble tracking the white ball in the bright lights of the stadiums,” he said. “I apparently had it from the time I was 18.”

Retiring brought him back to Ontario, where he started an industrial cleaning business that took care of several government buildings. That company morphed into a management company that ran a hotel.

It also brought him back to his fiancé and now wife, Janelle.

Later, he began working at the Ontario Science Centre, where he was in charge of exhibit maintenance. At the same time, he worked for the Town of Ajax where he scheduled the use of that town’s facilities.

While at the science centre, Simpson was a member of its Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism action team as well as a member of the Science Centre’s innovators ball team, which successfully raised funds for disenfranchised children to participate in science classes at the centre.

While living in Ajax, his love for nature was rekindled by a conservation area that was on the outskirts of town.

“I’d seen enough of the world to know there was more to life than city living,” he said. “Some people living in a city don’t know that because that’s all they know. I was tired of seeing cement and we had the desire to see more of Canada, especially Eastern Canada.”

In 2019, his growing family and some family friends, came to Nova Scotia for a visit. They stayed in Pugwash and visited Amherst frequently. He returned that same year for a second time when a local church asked him to give a testimonial.

Following that visit, the Simpsons, which now included daughter, Jaya, son, David, and mom, Ann, decided they were moving here.

“We didn’t care where, but we knew we wanted to be here in Nova Scotia and in this area of Nova Scotia,” he said.





Then the pandemic hit. That curtailed their plans, but only for a bit. With the help of friends, they bought a house in Maccan in 2021. Shortly after their arrival, he landed a job with the Town of Amherst as a seasonal parks attendant.

It was while working with Matt Selig that he first became aware of the active living co-ordinator position.

“Matt and I were winterizing a building in Beacon Park. Inside were all kinds of stuff like bikes and snowshoes. He told me about the active living co-ordinator position and told he thought I’d be great at it.”

When the position became available, he was again encouraged by Selig to apply for it. He did, and after talking with Human Resources Director Krista Crossman, he told his wife he found a job he wanted.

“I told her that what comes natural to you is the best kind of job to have,” he said. “I know with this job that I won’t feel it’s just a job. It’s going to be one I’m passionate about. One that I won’t worry about doing overtime because it is something I want to do.”

In welcoming Simpson to his new role, CAO Jason MacDonald said, “Dave has shown dedication, loyalty and great work during his time with us so far and we are very excited to have him join us on a full-time basis.”

Simpson is just as excited to be in the position. He is looking forward to building on the excellent program his predecessor, Allison Watson, put together. He also looks forward to learning more about the community.

He’s already a big supporter of the town.

“When I talk to people in Amherst, especially our youth, they keep telling me where they’re going to go, that they’re going to leave,” Simpson said. “What I like to tell them is the future of Amherst is brighter than you think. The grass is greener on the other side thing isn’t really true.

“I’ve lived all over the world and I can tell you Canada is a very special and unique place. Still, it’s not a good idea to move to someplace that is over saturated. There is no more space in Ontario or many other provinces, but there is space here in Nova Scotia and in Amherst. I would tell them that Nova Scotia and Amherst are going to grow, that





they should invest now for a future here in Amherst. It's better than going somewhere where the future has already passed.

“Here the opportunities are endless. There are opportunities here for you to grow in a profession. People are moving here for a reason. Moving here was the best decision we’ve made. My children are going to grow up here.”

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