

# LEDUC SPORTS HALL OF FAME

## Linda Christensen

Linda Christensen moved to Leduc with her husband Jens in 1973 when they were newly married. Their first son, Danny, was diagnosed with Down Syndrome, and it was this circumstance that launched Linda on her journey of spearheading Special Olympics Leduc.

Danny attended an early education program in West Edmonton, but Linda wanted to find local opportunities for him. There were few options in Leduc at that time. As Danny grew older, he attended soccer and swimming with his younger siblings, and Linda began working with Special Olympics Alberta to try to bring an affiliate to Leduc. In 1989, when Danny was 16, she became the chairperson of a three-member board for Special Olympics Leduc.

The program started out small, but soon word began to spread. By the spring of 1990 they had 15 registered athletes. They offered bowling at first, then they added floor hockey. Linda worked tirelessly to meet the needs of the growing program. Her leadership role was integral to its success. Over the years the program grew to include swimming, soccer, curling, T-ball, bocce ball and basketball. In 1992, one of Leduc's athletes was named the Special Olympics Alberta Athlete of the Year. In 1994 two of their swimmers competed in the Canadian Special Olympics in Halifax, and in 2017 their curling team won silver at the Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games in Grande Prairie.

The program continued thriving until Linda's retirement after 30 years of leading it. Now, Linda is enjoying the extra time she can spend with her three children and six grandchildren, although she dearly misses the Special Olympics. She credits the program with giving Danny and other special needs athletes in the community great opportunities to grow, build confidence and socialize. Danny still enjoys bowling.

