

SKETCH Orléans takes charge of Students in Motion

> Laura Cummings

After an initial three years in operation via a local councillor's office, the reins of east-end group Students in Motion are now being passed to area youth centre SKETCH Orléans.

"With the emergence of SKETCH, it was time for Students in Motion to go to the next step," explains Orléans Coun. Bob Monette, whose office established the organization. "SKETCH is able to go the extra mile with the kids and expand the services we've started already. It's a natural progression."

Students in Motion was launched three years ago in response to complaints about a lack of activities and recreation alternatives for Orléans youth, he continues. Drawing representatives from each of the participating high schools – Cairine Wilson, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, St. Matthew and St. Peter – Students in Motion participants help organize activities and initiatives for their peers.

"It was to find out what was missing in the community ... things youth could do in their spare time," Monette says, adding that since its inception the group hosted a winter fair, completed beautifying projects and held a coffeehouse for area high schools.

Talks about moving Students in Motion under the SKETCH umbrella have been in the works since August, he recounts, after his office completed their annual action plan for the upcoming year.

But the shift is not a negative one, Monette stresses, lauding SKETCH's "vibrant" leader-

ship and strong mandate.

"We took it as far as we could," he explains, adding that his office will remain a city liaison for the group and continue to support its events and initiatives. "We're not giving it up; it's not folding."

Taking charge of Students in Motion will enable the organization to "start a new chapter," says André Brisebois, SKETCH Orléans executive director. "It's a perfect match."

Though fostering new developments for Students in Motion will take time, he suggests that much is on the horizon for the youth involvement group. Creating a francophone chapter of the organization is one idea, Brisebois explains, potentially drawing from nearby schools like Garneau and Béatrice-Desloges.

With area high school students divided "about 50/50" between French and English, he says SKETCH can further their mandate by better catering to the Francophone population – a move Monette says he initially considered from the early days of Students in Motion, but one that could not come to fruition.

And while it's "too soon to say" what funding and budgeting decisions will be made regarding Students in Motion, the format of the group – drawing from several schools in the community and "renewing" the leadership with new students each year – will remain the same, Brisebois confirms.

"It works well," he explains. "It's kind of in line with what we wanted to do."