

# Double double toil and juggle: Offbeat hobby a hit

DEVON BABIN  
NTW Staff

Juggling and unicycling are activities one often associates with the circus. They are not common place interests and they certainly aren't seen as "cool." Until now.

On Wednesdays and Sundays Carl Roth, along with his two sons and a host of others, can be found at the Qualicum-Graham Park Community Centre, not far from the Queensway Carleton Hospital.

The goal of the drop-in centre is to give a home to anyone interested in unicycling and juggling and hopefully bring new faces into the two sports.

Roth moved to Ottawa from Alberta in 2000.

Being interested in juggling for years, he went a step further in 1994 and taught himself to unicycle.

"I taught myself – not a good way to do it," he said. "More injuries that way."

His sons Karl and Thomas caught on to the passions of their father and in 2001 the drop-in centre was started.

Since then the amount of interest has grown tremendously.

"I must have 50 or 60 [people] on my email list," he said.

When watching these guys, it is easy to see why they get into it and why more and more people are taking part.

"It's a fun thing to do. It's athletic, it's coordinated," said Roth.

Juggling eight and nine

pins at a time, his son Karl is among the best in Ottawa. What they are able to do while juggling and while riding unicycles is impressive and goes well beyond the stereotypical party clown, although many juggling clowns of various skill levels from the area do practice at the drop-in centre. No matter what a person's skill level, they are welcome.

**"I want to be able to do juggling and unicycling at the same time."**

**Zach Ramsay**

Together with his two sons, and another juggler by the name of Devon Eidick, Roth has a troop called "Right on the Head" and they perform at events all around the nation's capital.

At these shows they juggle torches and knives. And on their unicycles they drop off platforms that are upwards of five and six feet high.

"It becomes a cool thing to do from a circus thing," said Roth.

Zach Ramsay started coming to the drop-in with his dad. He compares unicycling to skateboarding and feels unicycling is much more impressive and he saw his progress on a unicycle almost immediately.

In fact, according to Roth, a person can start unicycling in only a few short practice sessions. It is one of those things that is fairly easy to learn, but extremely hard to master.

Zach Ramsay has been working on unicycling for a while now, and looks to move on to something a bit more advanced.

"I want to be able to do juggling and unicycling at the same time," he said.

The people who frequent the centre have become quite close, organizing rides on their unicycles downtown and many of them participate in events at the Canada Day Parade and Help Santa Toy Parade.

They also put on a unicycling event each year called the Ottawa Unicycle Invasion that brings people in from other cities.

To learn more about unicycling, juggling and to get more information on the drop-in centre go to [www.carlroth.net/nanaimo/parkjugglers](http://www.carlroth.net/nanaimo/parkjugglers).



DEVON BABIN PHOTOS

Everyone is encouraged to come by the juggling drop-in centre to learn more about juggling and unicycling.

(Top) Devon Eidick balances a club on his chin.

(Bottom) Karl Roth practices some basic juggling moves before moving on to more difficult maneuvers.