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MacGillivrays earn Hockey Heritage Award

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

The first-ever husband-and-wife recipients of the Georgetown Hockey Heritage Award were entering uncharted territory when they helped start up girls' hockey in Halton Hills in the spring of 1997.

For years, Pam and Bill MacGillivray's eldest of three daughters, Courtney, begged them to sign her up in a youth league, but the only option at the time meant playing with the boys.

At the age of 9, Courtney joined a girls' league in Brampton and she made the rep team in her first year. The MacGillivrays began to notice other local residents suiting up for travel teams outside this municipality and discovered that there were 20 girls registered within the Georgetown Minor Hockey Association.

"We got tired of seeing all these talented athletes playing in Etobicoke, Brampton or Mississauga and it was about time that someone put something together so they could play here," said Pam, a native of Quebec's Eastern Townships, who didn't have a hockey background.

"So many times I heard from young girls who would go to their brother's hockey games and had to sit in the stands and watch. They wanted to play so badly and finally they had their chance."

An informal meeting was held on the sideline of a soccer field following a youth game in May of 1997 and soon after a list of approximately 50 interested girls was compiled, setting the wheels in motion for the Halton Hills Girls' Hockey Association. Surpassing all expectations, close to 100 girls signed up for the inaugural campaign, with four teams playing in each of the under-15 and over-15 divisions.

"We were pleasantly surprised how many signed up that first year because we were scared it wouldn't go well," said Bill,

who grew up surrounded by street and pond hockey in the Montreal area.

"It blew us away because it all started on the side of a soccer field. We had a few parents who had kids on out-of-town girls' teams, some had started playing GMHA with the boys or went to Brampton. Paul Stover and Joy Thompson (of the Town of Halton Hills' recreation department) approached us because they knew we were involved with girls' hockey. They said if ever there was a time to do it, it was then."

After contacting the Ontario Women's Hockey Association, the executive for the HHGHA was set up in the MacGillivrays living room on Weber Dr. in Georgetown and became the location of all meetings.

The main stumbling block was finding ice time that by law had to be made available to female user groups as well as the thriving Georgetown and Acton minor hockey organizations, which were forced to give up some of their allocation to pave the way for the girls' leagues.

"There was a little bit of rumbling going on and we went to one meeting where we heard, 'I don't know how you can start up more hockey, there's not enough right now,'" Bill recalled.

"Then Joy said, 'It doesn't say boys-hockey-only on the front of the arena,' and the room went silent."

In the fall of '97, the fledgling girls' association organized skills-training sessions, since many of the participants hadn't worn hockey skates before, although Pam remembers most participants wanting to jump right into game action.

A contest was held to come up with a nickname and logo for the organization and nine-year-old first-year player Amy de Lafreniere suggestion of the Twisters was

the winner, with the jerseys sporting San Jose Sharks' colours.

Pam served as president, chief fundraiser, scheduler and a variety of other tasks, while Bill oversaw coach selection, volunteer recruitment and administrative duties.

Registration had to be capped after a couple of seasons due to a lack of available ice, so the executive looked to the new facilities being built in Milton. The North Halton Girls'



Bill and Pam MacGillivray have been named the recipients of the Georgetown Hockey Heritage Award.
Photo by Ted Brown

Hockey Association was formed in 2003 and it continues to grow today with 561 females registered, including a women's recreational league on Sunday afternoons in Georgetown.

"We just wanted to provide the best hockey we could for the girls who want-

ed to play here," added Pam, a "stay-at-home mom" who would rack up about 50,000 km a year on her Nissan Pathfinder when Courtney, Kylie and Camille all played rep in the Twisters' organization.

"Everybody was in it for the right rea-

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