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## Ron Lefebvre this year's Hockey Heritage Award recipient

By Eamonn Maher  
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The local dentist who helped oversee minor hockey house leagues in Georgetown for many years discovered that finding recruits to either convene or coach wasn't nearly as difficult as pulling teeth.

Ron Lefebvre, or Dr. Ron as he's widely known, is this year's recipient of the Georgetown Hockey Heritage Award for his more than three decades of volunteering in the minor ranks, which began as a coach at the rep levels and continued in the house leagues upon the arrival of his four children.

Lefebvre started as a convenor for the senior tyke and novice age groups under then house league directors Tim Somerville, Gary Stone and Brian James before taking on larger leadership roles, with prospective volunteers often screened in the dentist's chair.

"We were always looking for somebody to help out and by then the (dental) practice was quite busy, so there were lots of people coming in to see me, and I'd ask, 'Did you ever think about being a convenor,' and quite often it worked," laughed the 58-year-old New Liskeard, Ont., native.

"You've got to stay involved. My dad (Ray) taught me that. He coached at Warren Park in Toronto and he was always picking up a team. That's what you were supposed to do. People from small towns mostly get it."

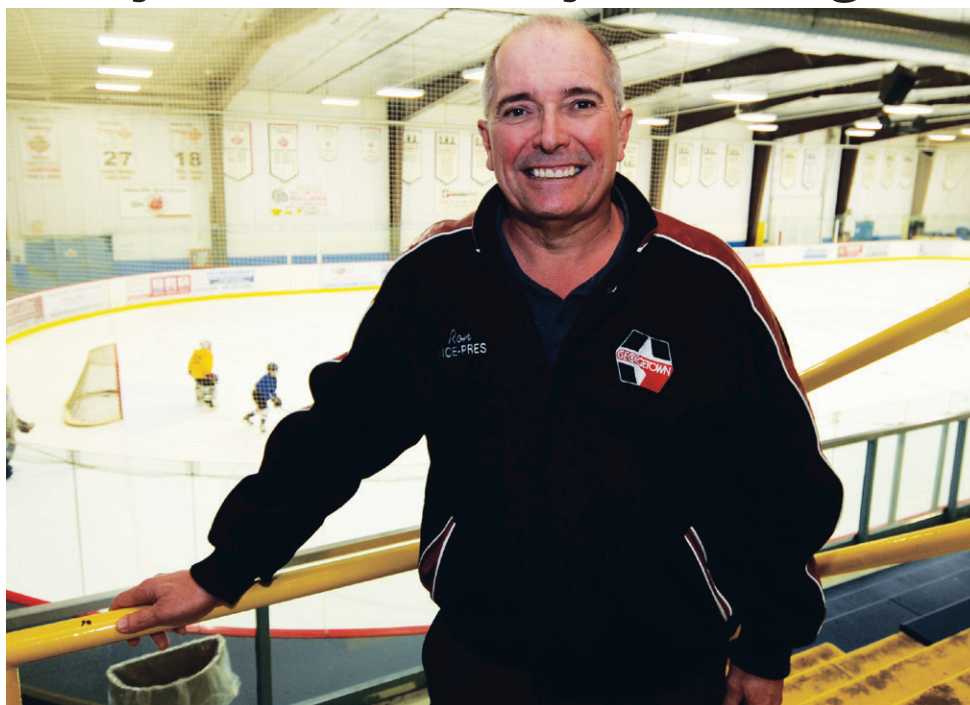
Lefebvre's spectacular two-goal debut as a tyke in his first game at the rink in New Liskeard provided a portal into his future as a player.

"I was ticked off because some other showboat took the MVP award," he recalled.

"It was (future NHLer) Wilf Paiement. He lasted one game in tyke and they moved him up to atom or something after that. I wasn't very good. My dad put frozen apple juice tins for goal posts out on the road when I was three, four, five, and that's the way you learned to skate."

Lefebvre moved with his family to Toronto at age eight and as a teen began coaching house league teams with the Royal York Rangers. He completed three NCCP coaching levels in three years, with the last under the tutelage of University of Toronto Varsity Blues' coach Tom Watt.

With a sandwich in hand, Lefebvre would at-



**Dr. Ron Lefebvre wants to thank a few people for helping him earn the Hockey Heritage Award, especially wife Dr. Janet Pownall, who often held the fort at home with the couple's four children while he was attending to duties at the rinks.**

*Photo by Eamonn Maher*

tend the Blues' late-afternoon practices at Varsity Arena and take notes of the drills being conducted. During an in-class session, Watt confronted Lefebvre and asked if he was a spy for U of T's chief rivals, the York Yeomen.

"This was the 1970s with all the new Russian stuff and the Level 3 was done as a university course, so by the time I was 22 I could've coached a Jr. A team. I really enjoyed the theory and the thinking behind it," he said.

"If it was a different generation, I'd probably be one of those stats-analytics guys."

Having earned his degree in dentistry from U of T, Lefebvre moved to Georgetown in 1981 at a time when the GMHA didn't allow a parent to be the head coach of a team. In 1982-83, he oversaw a minor bantam rep squad with Keith Bennett and those two combined again in 1988 with the bantam AA Raiders to finish third in the OHF championship tournament hosted by Georgetown.

The team lost just five games all year and three of those were against Milton, which went on to the provincial title.

After taking some time off and coming togeth-

er with wife and fellow dentist Janet Pownall in their downtown Georgetown practice, Lefebvre rejoined the GMHA when sons Mark and Kyle took up the sport as a tyke house league coach and was soon on the administrative side as well as a convenor for the tyke and novice leagues.

When Lefebvre began as house league director, there were 48 teams in all GMHA divisions and at its peak there were approximately 100 teams and more than 1,500 kids on the ice. Drafts were held to try to create parity amongst the teams and usually some changes needed to be made after the season started to maintain a competitive balance.

"Nobody should ever quit the game on your watch," added Lefebvre, who remains active in a supervisory role with the Halton Hills organization after leaving the board of directors in 2012.

"If a team's 0-20, they're not having fun, and if it's peewee, they're not coming back. You can say you're playing for the love of the game, but you still want a chance to win."

Monthly meetings were held to keep the executive members on the same page and sometimes

disputes involving coaches, parents or players had to be mediated. No matter how outlandish the situation, Lefebvre said a resolution could usually be found by referring to organization's constitution.

"Every once in a while you'd get a rogue coach, but the constitution had rules that you could just point to and say, 'Look, that's what's in place.' Mostly you went with the consensus. I was usually the loud voice, but I wasn't by any means the only voice."

Current HHMHA president Carson Mininch, James and Lefebvre teamed up to re-establish the select program in 2004 in all 11 divisions, which provided a higher calibre of play for the stronger house league players and served as a feeder system for the rep-level teams.

Lefebvre was also a driving force alongside Theresa & Gord Campbell behind the expansion of the House League Christmas Tournament, which is now named the Bob Goldham Memorial after the longtime NHLer and local native, opening up the annual event to all age levels, with generous goodie bags to boot.

Relations between the house league and rep divisions were sometimes strained over the issue of a lack of ice time at the town's three ice surfaces.

"Everybody goes to the board with their own agendas. I had mine for the house league and they had theirs for rep and we just had to work it out," he said.

"You start off with some people on the executive as adversaries and eventually they become your good friends. I'd start ranting to (registrar and schedule-maker) Geraldine (Hardcastle) a little bit about the ice time and she'd say, 'You've got to look at the big picture, not just your little picture.'"

A member of the Georgetown Kinsmen Club since 1983, Lefebvre was active as well with the development of new facilities in the town and sat on the early amalgamation committees that eventually brought the Georgetown and Acton associations together in 2013.

There were also a few late nights spent making repairs to teeth belonging to members of the Georgetown Jr. A Raiders and Lefebvre was a strong advocate of using mouth guards at all levels.

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