

You can play with pros in charity hockey tourney

BY JOHN CUDMORE
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Here's your chance to play hockey with former National Hockey League stars and top women players.

It's the RBC Hockey Helps The Homeless Mega Event, a one-day hockey tournament for men's and women's teams taking place Nov. 18 at the Magna Centre in Newmarket.

Organizers aim to raise \$300,000 to body-check homelessness in the GTA.

"The biggest issue we face is society's lack of understanding of why people end up on the street," said Hockey Helps The Homeless executive director Gary Scullion, 49, who has several former NHLers and women's hockey stars on board for the tournament. "We're hoping to show how people end up on the street. We're helping homeless people get off the street and start a new life."

Proceeds from the tournament will support agencies including Belinda's Place, Pathways, Habitat for Humanity, Light Patrol, Snug as a Bug, Gateway and Inn from the Cold.

Confirmed participants include former NHLers Gary Leeman, Rick Vaive and Steve Thomas and several others, who will be placed on teams participating in the tournament. Members of Canadian Women's Hockey League teams, including Olympic gold medallists Gillian Apps and Cherie Piper, will complement rosters in an eight-team women's division.

Hockey Helps the Homeless has raised more than \$3.5 million and assisted more than 18,000 homeless people since its 1996

ON THE WEB

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inception.

Front-line initiatives, the first point of contact on the streets, receive 30 per cent of the funding, Mr. Scullion said. About 70 per cent goes to reintegration and transition projects.

"That first point of contact is so important because there is so little trust with the homeless on the streets," he said. "You have to have a starting point to build trust."

Part of the tournament's mandate is education, Mr. Scullion said, noting many people end up homeless after a sudden trauma, such as the death of a loved one.

"Any one of us at any time could end up on the streets," he said.

Team and individual entries for the event are still being accepted. The cost is \$400 per player for men and \$250 for women.

For their entry fee, players receive the full pro experience, Mr. Scullion said, ranging from pro-style sweaters bearing their names and gift bags to equipment bag handlers and meals.

"Once you've played one time, you're hooked," he said.

There's a reception at the end of the day with dinner and guest speakers.

On the men's side, organizers are aiming for 10 teams, divided into under-40 and over-40 divisions. The women's category is



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

The RBC Hockey Helps the Homeless charity tournament will take place Nov. 18 at the Magna Centre in Newmarket. Former NHL player Kris King (from left), Canadian Women's Hockey League players Christina Kessler and Amanda Shaw, Hockey Helps the Homeless executive director Gary Scullion and former NHL player Mark Osborne are among the participants in the event.

open and makes its debut this year. Teams are guaranteed three games.

The deadline for entries is Nov. 11.

If you don't want to play, you can purchase a ticket for the reception for \$100 or register to raise money.

Other Hockey Helps the Homeless tournaments are held in Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver and there are plans to expand. The Newmarket event will also feature a game between Toronto Maple Leafs alumni and CWHL players.



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