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SPORTS

Award winner inspires others to take part

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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Sport has been an integral of Wendy Jacksie's life.

She's partaken in a number of sports through her youth while growing up in North York and to this day as a Stouffville resident.

But that's not all.

She's also taken on a variety of other positions including that of a coach, team manager and league convenor, much to the delight of young and old alike who know Jacksie. Her volunteer work did not go unnoticed.

The 60-year-old Jacksie has been named this year's Whitchurch-Stouffville Sports Person of the Year.

To be recognized during the Strawberry Festival Friday at 6 p.m., Jacksie was surprised upon being officially informed of her citation Monday after returning from a vacation.

"It was quite a shock," she said. "It's awesome ... it's fantastic. It's so amazing. When I was first told I said 'are you kidding me?'"

"I just love sports. It gives you something to do and to have fun. It keeps you young and moving."

Recalling that her parents weren't really into sports while she was growing up, Jacksie said a big factor that generated her interest was their proximity to a school, which was the hub of a variety of recreational activities.

Participating in volleyball, basketball and baseball, Jacksie earned numerous awards.

"Now when I do these things it's for the fun of it," she said.

The love of sports Jacksie acquired during her younger days carried over when she moved to Stouffville along with her husband Dennis and three children, Dylan, now 20, Ashley, 26, and Kristin, 24.

As a parent, Jacksie's taken on the role as a team manager and coach in each of her youngster's athletic endeavours.

During Dylan's younger days, she served as a coach and manager for his minor hockey and soccer teams. She's also been a coach when Ashley played house league soccer team and with Kristin's rep soccer team.

"I've always been involved from Day 1 with my kids' teams," she said.

What Jacksie is most proud of though, was her involvement in seeing the growth of the Stouffville Ladies Floor Hockey League since signing up as a player in 2001.

The following year, Jacksie was asked if she would like to be in charge and took on that responsibility head on. She handled registration, organized referees, scheduling, obtained the permit for St. Mark Catholic Elementary School before moving to Stouffville District Secondary School three years ago.

During the first year at the school, they had just a one-hour permit. Since then, they now have three hours for their league, which begins in September and concludes at the end of April.

What began as a pay-as-you play league has now evolved into one which has six teams with



WENDY JACKSIE

each player registering for \$100 that includes payment for referees, insurance, school permit and a year-end banquet dinner.

"The league gets everybody together," she said. "It's like a big social. It's just a lot of fun."

With the ice out at the Stouffville Arena from May to the end of July, Jacksie can be found there on Thursday evenings where she's been a member of the ladies ball hockey league during the past seven years.

When the ice is in, she's been a fixture in ladies ice hockey where she joined forces with Meredith Szabo and L.J. Bartle to launch the Ladies Shinny Hockey this year where participants converge at the Clippers Sports Complex on Saturdays.

Over the last 10 years, she's been a participant in the Stouffville Amateur Hockey League's Tuesday Night Ladies Over 40 division where she toils as a forward.

Jacksie has found time to take up skiing, where she's an instructor, and snowboarding.

An accounting officer at PACE Credit Union, Jacksie has also been involved in numerous charity walks and runs across the region.

"Wendy is a rock," said Stouffville resident Heather Bergman. "She is always upbeat, and despite whatever illness or injury she may be suffering from, or however busy her home life might get, she still carries on supporting her teams and fulfilling her duties. She is a great friend and definitely a motivation to everyone that meets her."

"Wendy has dedicated an incredible amount of her personal time and energy to ensure that the ladies of Stouffville and surrounds can enjoy a fun, inclusive and competitive game," said Stouffville resident Jackie Burkhart. "While organizing a sports program has its difficult moments, she administers it with diplomacy and respect, recognizing that a fun yet challenging experience is paramount."

"Her success in this endeavour is evident by the popularity and growth of our league and the close personal friendships that have developed between so many of our league ladies over the years. How else might we meet an old teammate we have not seen in 10 years and pick up a conversation as if we just saw each other last month?"