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Susie Kockerscheidt/Metroland

Donna Mallinos, 8, receives her hockey equipment Saturday from Tyler Morrow at The First Shift Canadian Tire/Bauer Hockey initiative.

First Shift hockey program scores

LISA QUEEN
lqueen@yrmg.com

The organizers of a welcoming event for a learn-to-play hockey program couldn't have picked a better model than six-year-old Avery Tubaro.

After getting outfitted in her new gear in front of dozens of kids and parents eagerly anticipating their introduction to the game next month, Avery explained why she is looking forward to entering the world of hockey.

"Because my brother and my sister do hockey and because hockey looks fun and I want to try being a goalie like my sister," the enthusiastic Newmarket youngster said at the Saturday afternoon event at the Newmarket Seniors' Meeting Place.

I like the taking part in the game and the skating around so that's pretty much why I like hockey."

Avery has played shinny in the past but is looking forward to being on a hockey team and making new friends.

"I like having friends. It's very, very good because I actually played soccer and soccer has teams too except you run, not skate," she said.

Especially with two older kids already playing the expensive sport, dad Ed Tubaro is

impressed his family only has to make a \$199 investment for Avery to join Canadian Tire's The First Shift program.

To join a Newmarket minor hockey team this year, parents would have to shell out \$550 for registration and a couple of hundred to \$1,000 for equipment.

Launched by Bauer Hockey and Hockey Canada, the initiative is for first-time hockey players aged six to 10. It is aimed at families who may face financial hardship getting their children into hockey and at those who want to make sure their youngsters like the game before making a commitment to the sport.

Boys and girls get all their equipment and six weeks of hockey instruction, which kicks off in Newmarket and Aurora on Nov. 5 and 6. The program is administered by local hockey organizations in 40 markets across Canada this season.

"It's a great program for the kids," Tubaro said.

"I think (cost) is one of the considerations. It's a lot different than, say, basketball or soccer where it's a little less expensive. A program like this is good. It gives people a chance to try it for the first time and not make that much of an investment just in case their kids don't like it."

FLYERS

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