

Talk Of The Town

Readers Write

First Shift and WSMHA give 'Un-Hockeyed' Kids a Taste of the Game



Eight year olds (left to right) Bella Rojas-Silva, Nicholas Kerr and Fred Embiricos have been trying hockey with forty three other youngsters on the First Shift programme this season. Ben Embiricos photo.

By Ben Embiricos

When looking at the wider community, church leaders will sometimes talk about the "un-churched" - those who have never been church regulars - and the "de-churched" - those who used to go but don't anymore. In a country where many people have an almost religious tie to the sport it seems appropriate to talk about "the un-hockeyed".

The un-hockeyed are families in which no one has played the nation's favourite sport. Many of the families whose kids are on the First Shift programme fit this description, including my own. If neither Mum nor Dad has played organized hockey then there is a fair chance the kids won't either.

Recognizing this, Hockey Canada and equipment manufacturer Bauer teamed up to create the First Shift

programme which aims to "bring one million new families into the sport globally over the next ten years".

We are in a modern era of indoor hockey arenas and proper equipment. Contrast this with the pond hockey of old (having not grown up in Canada, I picture here a cross between Franklin the Turtle and friends playing after school and the kids from the Hockey Sweater book refereed by the village priest). Today it feels like a big commitment to get into hockey, hence the First Shift aims "to break down barriers to entry". Families are given a chance to sample the game for minimal initial commitment. A relatively modest registration fee provides each kid with head to toe equipment and six on ice skills sessions.

Volunteers from the Whitchurch-Stouffville

Minor Hockey Association together with Bauer representatives fitted all the kids out completely at the Legion before the programme. This was no small task in itself.

It is not hard to work out why Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association was selected as a partner for running the programme. The dedication on the part of the volunteer coaches and organizers has been truly impressive. Each week fifteen or more adults show up on the ice ready to help the forty six new hockey players all aged between six and ten. There were some very unsteady legs on the ice that first week so it has been a big task.

Michael Mendes and his six year old son Anthony were agreed that the First Shift is "a great programme and a good way to try the sport". Similar appreciation was expressed by the parents of eight year olds Nicholas Kerr and Bella Rojas-Silva. Again, neither parent in those families had played the sport.

Extra credit is due to the WSMHA for extending the programme beyond the six weeks of the formal programme. The Association has taken it upon themselves to provide ice time for the children until the end of the season.

There are too many at the Association to list who deserve credit but perhaps special mention should go to organizers - Tammy De Luca and Coach Paul.

Well done!

Studio Tour Gives Thanks

The artists of the 15th annual Whitchurch-Stouffville Studio Tour wish to thank all of the visitors who came out to our studios on October 18th and 19th. It was very heart-warming to see our friends, neighbours, and new visitors showing so much appreciation for our artwork. It was indeed a great pleasure to share our stories of inspiration and the processes we use to create our pieces.

Thank you to all our sponsors who faithfully support us each year. You, our sponsors, so graciously help make this event possible! We also are grateful for the coverage and promotion from the Stouffville Free Press. To one and all, come see us again next year for our excitingly new work!

On behalf of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Studio Tour,
Lis Simpson

Santa Claus Parade Photo Contest

Great prizes, send in your photos for a chance to win!

Deadline for submission is Dec 14th 2015 at 12:00pm

For details and contest entry rules visit www.stouffville.com/stouffville-contests

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