

Christmas Classic raises tens of thousands for those in need



By Brock Weir

It started off as just a pre-Christmas get-together as friends laced up for some ice time, but over the past seven years, the game has gained significant traction.

That one game, followed by a small post-game drink and dinner with spouses, is almost a thing of the past. This year, over 70 people in 10 teams hit the ice at the Aurora Community Centre on December 22 for the seventh-annual Aurora Christmas Classic.

This year's efforts raised over \$32,000 for needy families right here in this community.

‘The origin of the Classic is literally a bunch of friends getting together at Christmas,’ says Dave Cox of the initiative started by friends Jamie Fryer and Elise Volpe. ‘They had one game of hockey, met back at the pub with their wives, had dinner, tossed in a little bit of money and helped two or three local families at Christmastime. For the first few years, that is what it was all about. After doing that, a few of them said, ‘Hey, this is a lot of fun, let’s try and expand it!’ Over the last three or four years, we’re now up to six teams with 10 guys a side plus a goalie.

‘This year we had over 70 hockey players and we all threw in \$200 each. We raised about \$14,000 through hockey, sold more tickets for the party afterwards, had a silent auction and raised about \$22,000 through the auction alone.’

By early December, approximately \$12,000 of what they raised had already gone to individuals in the community who need it the most.

The Aurora Christmas Classic connects with families in need through local schools through the principals and teachers at local schools who, in turn, would assess the needs within their own communities and buy gift cards to places like Superstore and Walmart so families could get out and buy food, winter clothing and toys just in time for the holidays.

‘This year we decided we would get back to our roots and help local families who are struggling,’ says Mr. Cox. ‘We have half of our funds to date that we will distribute into different areas, but the other half went to schools. Our silent auction was so successful this year we have to sit down as a committee and figure out where the remainder of the funds will go. We have two or three ideas floating around right now, but it will likely continue to go to do local things, whether that be helping kids who can’t afford to buy hockey gear or sign up for hockey, or other initiatives.’

Asked what the key to the success of the Aurora Christmas Classic is year over year, Mr. Cox chalks it up simply to friendship and camaraderie.

‘There are 70 hockey players and there is a connection between all of us, really,’ he says. ‘It is not hard to pull this off because it just becomes a great Christmas party for us as well. We always do it the Saturday before Christmas and everyone looks forward to this night. There is a real good feeling to this event, not to mention most of us are friends and have a connection with the event. This year, after the game, we were at Father’s Moustache and they were nice enough to shut the facility for us. We had about 150 people there at the pub afterwards for drinks, hors d’oeuvres and the silent auction ? and it was just a party!’