

Novice Tigers AA support teammate through road hockey cancer fundraiser



By Jake Courtepatte

The Road Hockey to Conquer Cancer tournament had a local twist this year, as Aurora Minor Hockey players rallied around a teammate in need.

Among the 1,387 players on site at Ontario Place last Saturday were the Aurora Tigers Novice AA team, participating under the name 'Trevor's Troops'.

The young athletes raised \$1,700 for the cause, in support of their teammate and buddy, Jack Thomson.

Area resident Shawn Burt is the Chief Hockey Officer at the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, and has run the tournament since its inception in 2011. Burt knows the Thomson family on a personal level.

At only eight-years old, Jack lost his father Trevor to cancer this past August. Born and raised in Aurora, Trevor was what Shawn called a 'lifetime Aurora guy'.

'He was so committed to minor hockey and the community here in Aurora. He was an outstanding guy.'

Jack's older brother, Spencer, also plays for the Tigers at the PeeWee level.

Burt said the Tigers organization was looking for a way to help the Thomsons from the early stages of Trevor's diagnosis.

'When Trevor was diagnosed, it sent shockwaves not only through our team, but through the whole community. So, we always wanted to do something for the Thomson family, and were able to fit it in the mix here.'

After renaming the team, the players came together in an act of solidarity at the tournament, playing a 25-minute game against the mascots from local teams like Carlton the Bear, Jason the Argonaut, and even the Sasquatch from Jack Links.

In a nice touch displaying the power that sport can bring, Jack will be wearing number 27 this hockey season, the number of Trevor's favourite hockey player, Darryl Sittler.

Sittler was present at the opening ceremony, where he met the family and team at centre ice for photos.

?It was a pretty special moment,? said Burt. ?He's a great guy, and something like that means a lot for the family.?

Despite the size and busy schedule of the dawn-to-dusk fundraiser, the moment was not lost for those involved.

?It was definitely the highlight of the day. The kids were having fun, it was nice to remember Trevor in a way he would want to be remembered.?

The Troops were in exhilarated spirits throughout the day, as Burt said they ?rallied around Jack and Spencer?.

?The whole family was able to just embrace the moment.?

This year's event raised a staggering \$2.219 million for cancer research, bringing the foundation close to the \$10 million mark. While it may be the world's largest road hockey fundraising event, Burt and his team are setting the goal even higher.

?Next year, we're trying to go for the world record in terms of scope and scale for a road hockey event.?

The event attracts a number of high-profile celebrity ambassadors and participants each year, from the likes of hockey greats like Johnny Bower to that of television personalities like Nick Kypreos.

Donations can be made to the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre at www.theprincessmargaret.ca.