

Sport Aurora highlights 'Year of Sport' at AGM and looks to the future

By Jake Courtepatte

The Year of Sport in Aurora is now behind us. 2015 brought about the 'Activate Aurora' plan, announced by former MP Lois Brown to make Aurora Canada's most active community.

A new draft Parks and Recreation master plan was introduced at Town Council.

The 'All Kids Can Play' program was successful in providing 34 children with almost \$5,000 in support to get in the game.

With the draft sports plan and revised Parks and Rec plan set to be reviewed this week, Sport Aurora set in motion new initiatives for 2016 at their Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Council Chambers last week.

The New Year marks the first year for the 36-member umbrella organization without the \$200,000 Ontario Trillium Grant, money that has played a major role in the significant growth and development of Sport Aurora since 2012.

'2016 brings a new set of challenges, of which the most important is the goal of self-sustainability for Sport Aurora,' said Sport Aurora President, Stephen Kimmerer. 'Sport Aurora must find new methods and opportunities to meet financial support so we can continue to provide, enhance, and grow the services and programs that have made Sport Aurora an influential leader in the community.'

Under the Trillium Grant umbrella, the organization has hit major milestones such as the training of over 100 new coaches, as well as the implementation of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHoF), now in its third year with 17 inducted members.

While some may see the end of the grant as a setback, Sport Aurora has set plans to recuperate funds through service agreements, corporate sponsorships, new grant opportunities, and donations to advance a number of new initiatives for the ASHoF in 2016.

Chief among them is the relocation of the Hall, from the third floor of Town Hall to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC).

Through a recommendation made by the Board of Governors, ASHoF Chair Ron Weese said the Hall will be moved to a more public and more visible space, exhibiting artefacts and memorabilia from the inductees.

Nancy Black, project manager of the ASHoF, said the relocation is tentatively set for September.

'It's a big deal,' said Black. 'We're happy to be on the third floor of Town Hall, but we'll be even happier to be in a location that has more access for ongoing hours. More people can view all the wonderful pieces we have in the Hall.'

'This is a sport tourism initiative,' added Weese. 'There are thousands and thousands of people going through [the SARC], it's a big step in preserving the legacy of our sports organizations.'

Ms. Black is inviting anyone to come forward with donations, both of items and of funding, to add to this 'more expansive' location.

'We're not just going to display artefacts of our honoured members, we're going to display sport heritage in Aurora. You are the keepers in sport heritage, so we want your stories.'

Also added to the Hall will be a 'Sport Champions of the Hall' initiative, a pledge program comprising of sport organizations that make a one-time sponsorship pledge of \$250 or more.

The organization's name and logo will be emblazoned on a plaque in the Hall, commemorating the commitment made by the organization to the sustainability of the Hall.

Aurora Men's Slo Pitch, Ducks Swimming, Storm Volleyball, Evolution Gymnastics, York North Basketball Association, Master Ducks, York Old Timers Hockey League, Central York Girl's Hockey Association, and Sport Aurora have already joined the Sport Champions list.

Other new initiatives put forward included a call for the implementation of a sports development officer within Sport Aurora, as well as adding baseline concussion testing to the minor sports schedule.