

## Sport Aurora receives grant from Ontario Trillium Foundation

Sport Aurora was on the receiving end this time.

The not-for-profit organization, which has been a staple and advocate for sport in the community, has received \$105,300 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), they confirmed last Wednesday over a virtual meeting.

“Sport Aurora, has shown that it's been a team player in the sports community. You put together a strong game plan and a compelling case for how \$105,300 resilient communities fund grant will help you meet the challenges that COVID has created,” said Shelley Wister-Smith, the part-time chair of the grant review team in the Simcoe-York area.

Since the start of the pandemic, Sport Aurora has held Return To Play sessions to assuage the impact of COVID-19 in local sport.

Sport Aurora President Ron Weese and Executive Director Laurie Mueller brought in coaches from various local clubs, and awarded athletes their annual player and coach awards safely throughout the year.

“Ultimately, this grant is to help Sport Aurora rebuild and recover and continue delivering the programs the community relies on,” Wister-Smith said.

In front of MPP Michael Parsa, Wister-Smith and representatives from MPP Christine Elliot's office, Sport Aurora pinpointed areas they will look to improve.

The first being communication; that is an ever-changing climate in these trying times.

“We're going to provide targeted surveys to sport organizations, to coaches, to volunteers and to the general public, to find out and take the temperature of what's going on,” Weese said. “Based upon that we will be doing some webinars. If there are concerns about safety, we'll bring safety experts in.”

Sport Aurora intends to build on the relationship with the general public and stakeholders. It also intends to further enhance volunteer involvement within the community.

Chair of Sport Volunteer Development Jim Clark elaborated on what the Board intends to accomplish with sports volunteers.

“One of the results of a survey that was done, was almost 75 per cent of active volunteers in Canada are over 65,” Clark said. “Their fall-off in volunteering has been costly to sports organizations.”

One of the intentions is to collaborate with local stakeholders to learn how they recruit volunteers. Sport leaders will be brought into the fold to learn of the necessity of volunteers and to ensure a safe environment.

What Clark has also learned is there isn't a good program around to track and trace volunteers.

Sport Aurora, he says, wants to track and trace volunteers to streamline the process.

The organization intends to continue to revamp their communications digitally with an avid interest in increasing their interactions by 20 per cent.

The company will also be using this grant to plan an all-inclusive event for children to try all sports. Which sports that will be available is yet to be determined.

The biggest obstacle moving forward is the current status of public health. Sport Aurora will be looking to introduce this around the springtime and begin outdoors for this event, Ryan Gardner said in the meeting.

?Kids have the opportunity and will have the opportunity to fall in love with something they didn't know,? Gardner said.

As an umbrella organization for numerous community sports groups, and an unequivocal avenue for children of all ages and family status' to be involved in sport, this grant will grow Sport Aurora.

Look for Sport Aurora to be more involved in the community in the coming weeks.

**By Robert Belardi**