

Stinger Girls celebrated for BMO win -- but support still needed!



By Brock Weir

They've got a passion in their team and they ain't afraid to show it.

That's the cheer of Aurora's U9 Stinger Girls. As they were celebrated as the Bank of Montreal's Team of the Week on Friday evening, their passion for their team and their passion for the community was reflected right back at them.

The soccer team was named the Bank of Montreal's Team of the Week in the lead-up to Canada Day. One of just 15 teams which will be selected throughout the summer from well over 400 entries, BMO celebrated their achievements with a special party and celebration at their Bayview and Wellington Branch.

There, they not only celebrated their team, but they also received some nifty BMO Swag and \$500 for their charity of choice -- the Aurora Food Pantry.

"You guys were a highlight to us from the very beginning," said Katelyn May, Ontario representative for the BMO Team of the Week Program. "The things you have been doing are absolutely incredible and we want you to know we appreciate it very much and you deserve to be recognized as one of the top 15 teams in all of Canada."

Friday's celebration was also attended by Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, who paid tribute to the girls, the coaches, and their efforts lending a hand to the Mayor's Anti-Litter Day in April, along with Aurora Food Pantry chair Lorna Rummenie and treasurer Monica Day.

"The money will go to buy food for the need of Aurora," Ms. Rummenie told the girls. "Each week we buy milk, margarine and eggs and some hamburger these days when we get extra money. We get vegetables. Some have community gardens and supply us with vegetables and we are so thankful."

Gathered outside the bank were not only the Stingers girls, but Bank of Montreal employees, and a flood of proud parents, grandparents, team supporters and, of course, coaches.

For Coach Christine, the easiest thing to say about the Stinger Girls is they were a team from the moment they stepped onto the field, and that has continued well off the grass. They seek out opportunities to spend time together outside of the beautiful game, she said, and, all importantly, they actually enjoy it.

"We're a team that genuinely cares about and gets involved in our community," she said. "From participation in the Aurora Santa

Claus and Canada Day Parades to the 1 kilometre race we did raising funds for Strides for Stroke, to attendance at the Mayor's Anti-Litter Day, to sponsoring a family through the holiday heroes program, the best part is we're not done getting involved.?

The Stingers' support has not been limited to runs, picking up litter, or volunteering at local parades. They have also given back on the personal level to Carter, a Newmarket boy who, they say, is 'braver than any person they have ever known.' Made an honorary Stinger after the girls decided to dedicate a season to them, they now wear his name emblazoned on their jerseys and he affectionately calls them 'his team.'

The mere mention of his name brought forward grins and enthusiastic applause from every U9 Stinger.

'We understand that our success does not come easily,' said Coach Christine. 'It is our effort and our attitude that get us there. Soccer is what brought us together, but it is kindness, compassion, and commitment that keeps us glued. Talent is what got us where we are, but character will keep us here.'

'They say it takes a village to raise a child, so I am going to say it takes a community to raise a team. In our community, we have 12 delightful, spunky, and hardworking girls. We have committed families, supportive siblings, technical direction and leadership, club support, sponsors who help to fund what is surprisingly not an inexpensive sport.'

'What's different for these girls is in a world that is seemingly egocentric and fixated on image there are memories we are creating as a team when they are not kicking the soccer ball around. The memories of sponsoring and honouring a little boy whose battle is far more important than any soccer battle they are ever going to face; the memory of sponsoring a family that wasn't quite as fortunate as we are; buying boots, and hats, and snow pants, rather than toys and the latest electronic device; imagine the impact these memories are going to have on their own children one day and perhaps even a sports team they have the privilege of coaching.'

Looking out into the collection of parents either beaming or dabbing their eyes in pride, Coach Christina said the biggest pride parents see when looking at their daughters is 'the kind, caring committed little girl they are raising.'

'It's easy to say we're a team on and off the field, but we're so much more than that ? we're a life team.'

If it takes a community to raise a team, you can help raise your local team to be the grand champions in BMO's Team of the Week by logging onto bmosoccer.com, clicking 'Find a Team' and searching for Aurora. Your support to push them over the top, will not only land the Stingers the ultimate glory, but a significant investment from the Bank in Aurora's own sports fields.