

16th Annual Central York Panther Pride House League tournament welcomes 60 teams from across Ontario



The Opening Ceremonies of the 16th Annual Central York Panther Pride House League Tournament were held at the Magna Centre in Newmarket on Friday morning.

Central York Girls Hockey Association President Mark Dubeau, CYGHA Director-at-Large Ashley Hogue, Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Newmarket Mayor John Taylor welcomed 60 teams during a ceremonial puck drop at centre ice. 52 Girls Hockey Teams, as well as eight Senior Women's teams, competed in the tournament that featured squads from Sudbury, Barrie, Ottawa-Nepean, Kitchener, St. Catharines, Newmarket, and Aurora.

The Magna Centre was a hive of positive energy on Opening Day with hundreds of players taking advantage of a PA Day in most school boards across Ontario to take to the multiple ice pads at the Magna Centre and enjoy the weekend playing hockey with their teammates.

CYGHA President Mark Dubeau said he was happy that the Panthers organization could provide house league players from across the province with a chance to play extra hockey games they might not otherwise have.

?To give hundreds of players the opportunity to play more games than they're normally going to play is one of the best things of our Panther Pride tournament. The benefits are numerous for these players, especially the experience of playing other teams from other centres. Some of the players have aspirations to play at the next level and this is a good opportunity to experience travel hockey.?

Mayor Mrakas, bedecked in an Aurora Panthers scarf, applauded the Central York Panthers' efforts to organize such an extensive tournament for girls in the community and across the province.

?It's great to see young women being able to participate in a high-level tournament that is also provided for boys. Providing these opportunities for girls to play competitive hockey is really valuable.?

Mayor Taylor also extolled the virtues of the tournament and its positive impact on the Town: ?After COVID, just seeing kids out having fun is the big win. I've got young kids and I can appreciate the many benefits of participating in a tournament like this; it means less screen time, more play time. This is a great opportunity for girls to play hockey and we look forward to hosting hundreds of people all weekend. I feel good for the local restaurant and hotel owners who will benefit from the visitors coming into Newmarket from all over the province.?

Based on the spirited tilts on the ice at the Magna Centre on Friday, as well as the charity food drive and vendors' tables packed with

donors and customers, respectively, in the arena's foyer, it was evident that a community hockey tournament involving hundreds of athletes was a superb idea by the CYGHA which engaged kids in healthy activities on a PA Day and, by extension, for an entire weekend.

By Jim Stewart