

AKBA home run derby helps family hit with leukemia



By Jake Courtepatte

12-year old Matthew Littlejohn was hit with the biggest news of his life in early May.

The seemingly healthy AAA hockey player's trouble began with foot pain, which a clinic diagnosed as a virus. It spread into both ankle and wrist pain, so much so that he could hardly walk. Another diagnosis for low iron eventually led to an appointment with a gastrointestinal specialist, who confirmed the diagnosis of leukemia in Matthew.

Matthew's younger brother, Carson, is an athlete himself, playing on the Newmarket Hawks Rookie baseball team. The Hawks were in town last weekend for the fourth annual Aurora Rookie Baseball Tournament, a twelve-team tournament held at Aurora's Lambert Willson Park.

While the baseball was exhilarating, the highlight of the weekend was perhaps what the teams came together to do in support of Matthew.

The Aurora King Baseball Association was able to organize a fun, yet competitive Parents Homerun Derby on Saturday afternoon between games, where five dollars bought three balls and a chance to show off mom's or dad's hitting prowess.

Kids from all twelve teams were cheering at the top of their lungs whenever a parent from their team stepped to the plate, an exciting hour-or-so of long balls for a great cause.

It turned out great, said Patti Mikula, the tournament coordinator. There were a lot of people that went up to the plate, people got behind the cause here.

Many of the dads took second or third turns, adding to the pot each time.

While few were able to clear the fence, Shane from the Hamilton team hit a home run on all three balls, much to the delight of his team.

In terms of actual baseball, the Aurora Rookie team fell in three close games to Newmarket, Bloordale, and Ajax. But the real winners were the Littlejohns, whom the AKBA was able to raise hundreds of dollars for to help with Matthew's treatment costs.

A little goes a long way, said Mikula.

A fundraiser has been set up for August 15 for Matthew, including raffles and a silent auction. To learn more or to donate, contact Patricia O'Doherty at 905-717-5857 or Tammy Schmidt at 905-717-1262.