

All-Stars showcase Aurora softball talent



By Jake Courtepatte

The best of the best in Aurora softball squared off Saturday in the Aurora Men's Softball League's inaugural All-Star game at Lambert Willson Park.

The league is comprised of two divisions, Masters for ages 35 and over, and Open, for ages 18 and over. Saturday's event was the first time the two divisions have ever faced off against each other.

"Today we're trying to promote," said Reg Schade. "Over the years, the divisions have polarized—we want to bring the two divisions together to show that we're one big organization. We want everyone to get to know each other and have fun, because that's what we're all here for."

"Most of these guys have been in ball all their life, regardless of what level," said Glen Payne, vice president of the Master's division. "So it's tough when that time ends. We offer competitive ball, something to look forward to, and making an all-star roster is just something else to compete for."

In a two-game, aggregate score competition, the Masters bested the Open division, earning bragging rights at the year-end banquet. The day also featured a home-run derby, and a food truck with funds going to Yellow Brick House: an organization in Aurora for abused women and children.

Philanthropy is something near and dear to the members of the AMSL, who donate about 5% of annual revenue to local charities.

The league is hoping to be able to donate even more by growing the organization.

"We're always looking to bring in new teams, new players," said Payne. "We're a very established league, but we still want to grow. We have eight teams in the Masters division, and ten in the Open, which is great but we want to continue to expand."

Schade said the league is looking to add two more teams to the Masters division next year.

"We're putting a call out to the community to get the Masters up to ten. Up until now, we've always used word of mouth to find new players. This year we're going to be advertising."

"We want to get the word out now that we have a good, quality league with great diamonds, good lighting, and excellent umpires," said Payne. "It's a well-run league."

Although the all-star festivities may have had talent leaning more towards one side of the spectrum, the regular season of the AMSL is welcoming of players of any skill level.

"We have players that played AAA ball, and players that played rec ball," said Payne. "It's all kinds. We create a competitive atmosphere using the players we have."

?What we're trying to do is have a destination for the kids going up from minor ball,? said Reg Schade, president of AMSL. ?To give them an opportunity to play into their fifties or sixties. We want guys in Aurora to know that there's always an opportunity to play ball.?

You can learn more about the organization at www.amsl.ca.