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Hall of Fame honouree Murphy left a lasting legacy in Aurora

By Jake Courtepatte

Though Mike Murphy may no longer have roots in Aurora, the NHL's Senior Vice President of Hockey Operations, legacy lives on.

In the mid-90s, Murphy Hockey School filled a void in the Aurora Minor Hockey community it continues to serve to this day.

?It was a shot in the dark,? said Murphy. ?At the time there were a few camps here and there, but nothing formal that dealt with entry-level kids. And that's what we focused on ? kids that wanted to come to hockey school, but otherwise might have been afraid to.?

It is precisely this level of community involvement that has landed Murphy in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, one of four inductees to the 2016 class.
Having just taken the position as head coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1996, Murphy was approached by his brother Paul, a teacher, about the idea of starting a hockey school.

Paul became the administrative brains of the operation, and Mike the on-ice talent, forming a program that would bring in elite teaching talent from across the NHL, OHL, and the world.

Fellow 2016 ASHoF inductee Mike Kitchen, an NHL assistant coach as well, was one of the school's first employees.

The level of teaching talent, as well as the working relationship between the two brothers, was warmly welcomed by the community.

?We really hit a nerve with the town of Aurora,? said Murphy. ?We got such a great response?we made it very obvious to the people that sent their kids to the school that it was going to be well managed, well maintained, and we did exactly that.?

Paul would go on to be the principal of Our Lady of Grace Elementary School in Aurora.

After about a decade, when Paul left teaching and Mike became busier with the NHL, the reins were handed to Mike's son Sean.

?Sean has actually made it even more successful than it was with us. He's more detailed, he's made sure that when kids go to the Murphy Hockey School, it's not just about hockey. It's about the kids both on and off the ice, as a hockey player and as a student.?

Murphy credits much of the school's success to the kind of players it has been geared towards ? with many schools these days looking to further the career of the elite talents, the Murphy Hockey School has tended to help beginners and early developers.

?The camp has been molded around that premise?we'll take younger, undeveloped players, try to make them have fun, and develop some hockey skills along the way.?

That is not to say Murphy Hockey School is not among the best in developing hockey talent in the GTA ? between the hockey networks of Murphy and his three sons, teachers that have come through the door include the likes of Ryan Murphy of the Carolina Hurricanes, Mike Cammalleri of the New Jersey Devils, and Michael Del Zotto of the Philadelphia Flyers.

Murphy, who moved to Aurora in 1991 and lived in the town until 2009, had quite a strong hockey resume of his own. In a playing career that spanned 831 games, he notched 556 points between the St. Louis Blues, New York Rangers, and most prominently the L.A. Kings.

He served two years as head coach of the Maple Leafs, before moving on to the NHL executive ranks.

Though he may be working among the most elite names and faces in the game of hockey today as an NHL Vice President, Murphy still sees the Aurora minor system, in which all three of his boys played, as a model for other organizations and leagues to follow.

?I think the state of minor hockey in Canada is excellent,? said Murphy. ?And Aurora is a microcosm of that. I see great female participation, I see York-Simcoe's hockey programs as one of the best in the world. I know it's one of the best in the Toronto area, and Toronto is the best hockey area in the world.?

Murphy has been inducted along with Kitchen, assistant coach of the Chicago Blackhawks, and Sheldon Galbraith, a legendary figure skating coach, into the Coaches category of the Hall. Downhill ski Olympian Karen Stemmle was also inducted, into the Athlete category.

Next week, The Auroran will highlight Stemmle's path into the Hall.

Held annually at St. Andrew's College, the ASHoF Induction dinner is one of the most spectacular nights of the year in the Aurora sports community. This year's dinner will be held on November 2.

More information can be found at www.aurorashof.ca.