

Hockey For Hodge returns for Family Day fundraiser

The second annual Hockey for Hodge hockey tournament and fundraiser will take place once again this year at the Aurora Community Centre, and the community is welcome to join the Family Day festivities.

This event will run all day long, beginning with a hockey tournament from 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., followed by a family skate from 4 ? 5 p.m., and a banquet, open from five to seven.

The banquet space will be open throughout the day and families are encouraged to come enjoy the hockey games with the chance to win raffles prizes that include Maple Leafs tickets, spa packages and golf.

The day was created for Chris and Cathy Hodgins.

On Labour Day in 2018, Chris Hodgins was involved in a horrible Sea Doo accident, forcing him into a wheelchair and leaving the 35-year-old with multiple spinal cord injuries.

It was an idea sparked by a group of people close to Hodgins, including one of his closest friends, Chris Cork.

With a GoFundMe campaign already underway, over the Christmas break a few months after the accident, the group of friends suggested an event for their friend.

?Family Day just seemed like the right time. We wanted the tournament to be about family and about helping people,? expressed Cork, saying this was a good weekend where everyone can be around.

With the help of the Town of Aurora providing ice-time and the banquet venue at a discounted cost, the tournament is organized by eight of Hodgins' friends. All eight captains will draft a 12 man team.

Banquet space is available throughout the duration of the day with drinks and snacks provided.

The event organizers' main focus is to provide a great experience for everyone attending with an emphasis on family and friends coming together, supporting the Hodgins family in their time of need.

The organizers said the money that is received to support Chris is only a bonus.

In its first year, the fundraiser, earned around \$20,000 in donations from people living in the community. No large sponsors were involved, only those with good hearts. Over 150 people attended last year and it was a sight to see for the organizers.

?We received so much support from so many different people, whether it was people attending or people helping out with their time in volunteering, and local businesses donating food and raffle prizes.?

Committee members consolidated once the day was complete, overjoyed and proud of their accomplishment.

Ahead of the event, Cork says that Hodgins has made a great improvement from last year and he is looking forward to playing a bigger role in this year's event.

It is a long road to recovery; the event does not extenuate his injuries. Since last year's tournament, Chris has been able to move into his own accessible apartment in Toronto. It has helped restore his independence after spending several months in the hospital and rehab facilities.

Hodgins will continue therapy on his road to recovery. It is a time where him and his family, you can say, are experiencing a journey together, from a miracle surgery in the hospital to being able to have a second chance.

The event will take place at the Aurora Community Centre with the hockey tournament being held on both ACC1 and ACC2. The family skate will take place on ACC2 and the banquet will be held in the event space above ACC1.

By Robert Belardi