

Local funding puts young athletes back in the game



By Jake Courtepatte

Sport Aurora is looking for your help to make sure that no child sits on the sidelines.

The umbrella group for countless sports organizations in the local community recently received two large boosts to its 'All Kids Can Play' program, an initiative aimed at providing funds for children to play sports whose families otherwise could not afford it.

Julie and Walter Karabin, as well as ex-Maple Leaf Kris King, contributed \$2,500 to the program through their 2K 4 KIDS fundraiser.

Another boost came in the form of a \$5,000 cheque from the Rotary Club of Aurora, one of the program's founding donors in 2012.

With the program now in its fourth year, All Kids Can Play has provided over \$15,000 worth of funding to young local athletes and their families, while working with Canadian Tire's JumpStart program.

'One of the objectives that Sport Aurora has is to increase participation,' said Ron Weese, president of Sport Aurora. 'We looked at ways we could do that, and of course one of the obstacles was finances.'

A 2011 Ipsos-Reid survey found that one in three Canadian families cannot afford to enroll their children in sport and recreational activities due to financial barriers.

As the Ontario education system has yet to adopt the requisite 60 minutes of physical activity per day in curricular activities, many school-age children are not getting the exercise they need strictly through the schoolyard.

Aside from the health risks, a lack of athletic participation poses a social issue as well.

'Participation in sport activities is crucial to community integration, after school and the church,' said Weese. 'What we want to do for new people coming into town is make sure to plug them into one of our sports organizations as quickly as possible.'

'If children don't have the opportunity to be involved in sport, sometimes they're left on the outside. We really do have to make a situation where a child has a 'right' to play.'

According to All Kids Can Play Chair Sarah Smith, the program has provided funding for approximately 65 athletes over the last

two years alone.

As this number continues to grow, so does the need for funding from service organizations, individuals, and companies.

?We do a balancing act,? said Weese. ?The perfect balance is a flow of funds coming in from donors, with enough to send out the other way. That's how we can help the most amount of people.?

100% of funds donated go directly to the cause.

?All those who are interested in making sure that all kids can play in Aurora can go to the website and inquire.?

The 27 different organizations that Sport Aurora works with often match the donations provided, in order to give as much assistance as possible.