

Puck drops on second annual Aurora Cup



By Jake Courtepatte

Student athletes from across Aurora's elementary schools took a break from the classroom last Wednesday, instead getting their education on the ice in the annual Aurora Cup hockey tournament.

The second installment of the co-ed event, boys and girls from St. Joseph, Holy Spirit, St. Jerome, Light of Christ, and Our Lady of Grace took to the Stronach Aurora Rec Complex to determine the top team from Grades 6-8.

Our Lady of Grace came out on top, though tournament organizer Kristen Dajia sees it as more than just a competition.

"I especially like the fact that the referees enjoy doing the tournament," said Dajia, who created the tournament last year. "There is an atmosphere of competitive fun and camaraderie on the ice, as the players all know each other from our minor hockey teams. I think it's easier and more enjoyable hockey to ref. It's the good side of hockey!"

Mayor Tom Mrakas dropped the ceremonial puck on the popular tournament, with students, staff and parents coming out to support each of the five schools that have been represented in both of the tournaments.

Light of Christ took home the original Aurora Cup in February of 2018, where Dajia taught for eleven years. Transferring to a school in Richmond Hill in 2013, she saw an elementary school hockey program that was flourishing in the Richmond Hill area, and a void to be filled in the Aurora school system.

"(Richmond Hill) has been running an elementary school tournament as part of their Winter Carnival for over 50 years," said Dajia. "I coached the hockey teams there in this Winter Carnival tournament for four years. I came to know the organizers and studied how they ran the tournament.

"When I retired from teaching last year, I had the time and decided to see if I could make an Aurora elementary school tournament go here, on a smaller scale."

This year's incarnation featured a scavenger hunt through the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame display at the SARC, where students were able to learn about Aurora's rich sporting history between games, earning prizes from the tournament sponsor, Wintergreen Learning Materials in Bradford.

Royal Bank of Canada also contributed one-thousand dollars, while volunteers donated their time to the worthy cause.

Dajia and her team are looking to grow the tournament for its third year, involving any and all elementary schools in the area.