

SAC students smash expectations in spring festivities



By Brock Weir

St. Andrew's students smashed their expectations last week in their efforts to help local kids in need.

The students put their heads together to form the third annual Highland Spring Smash, a day of fun and games, to benefit the York Region's Children's Aid Society (CAS).

The relationship between SAC and the CAS is a long-standing one and came together with the entire student body taking to the fields with a \$25 buy-in for basketball, flag football, squash, soccer, road hockey, and ultimate Frisbee.

This year, however, students in charge of the event decided to be a bit more ambitious. After two previous years raising in the neighbourhood of \$10,000 to benefit the CAS' 'Power of Play' campaign, their ultimate goal was \$15,000, which they achieved with little over a week to spare.

'We came to that number because we thought that was a reasonable amount for everyone in the St. Andrew's community to donate \$25,' said Graeme Allison, who acted as co-CEO of the event with Jack McDonald, both Grade 12 students. 'There are about 600 people, staff, and students all together and that is about \$15,000. We know that not everybody will bring in \$25, but we thought if we could set that amount, it would get people thinking that is not a huge amount and that it would go to a great cause. There wouldn't be that pressure to donate the \$300 or \$400.'

In the weeks leading up to the event, Mr. Allison said the reception from students and the SAC community as a whole had been 'awesome' and with five days to go before the event, they had raised \$13,500 and went far over the top on the weekend leading up to the May 27 festivities.

'Part of our marketing to the students at St. Andrew's was we had a good opportunity to participate in sports, we have such good facilities and, as a student body, I think [CAS] resonates that there are families and kids out there who really do not have the opportunity to participate in sports or have the opportunity to be on a team,' he said. 'When you look at our school, every kid who has had the opportunity to do that, giving back to the community, particularly to kids their own age, really resonates.'

This was a feeling shared by Leslie Humphrey of the CAS. She said having SAC as a partner is a 'gift' in many ways as the kids at the school are privileged and having that direct connection with those who do not enjoy such privilege creates a unique and 'fabulous' combination.

'100 per cent of the money that is raised comes to us and it goes to our special projects and 100 per cent goes back to the kids,' she

said. "These are families and children that we are working within the community who are less fortunate and the funds will go in situations like little Johnny is a wonderful soccer player and his parents can't afford for him to play Rep soccer. We pay for him to go and do that. It will go towards Sarah, who is six years old and has never had a bike. Her parents can't afford it, so we go and buy her a bike.

"It is things that people take for granted every day and we help kids have a more normal life. It is unfortunate that it is in our back yard and it is in York Region. When we go out to a family and the kids don't have their own bed and they're sleeping on the floor, we go out and buy them a bed and that is through funding in Children's Special Projects."

Further partnerships between SAC and the CAS include the Holiday Heroes Campaign, which allows them to directly buy gifts for the kids being assisted by CAS from the kid who has her eye on a toy, or a kid who just wants the chance to go to the mall and buy something as simple as a new winter coat.

For more information on how to support the CAS and its programs, visit www.canadahelps.org and click on the York Region Children's Aid Society.

"Every penny truly goes a long way for the children we serve," said Ms. Humphrey.