

Stinger Boys know not every local kid is as fortunate



By Brock Weir

In soccer communities like Aurora, kids soccer jerseys accumulate in kids' closets almost at the same rate as outgrown shoes.

As parents of kids in the Stingers U9 Soccer Team noticed the growing numbers, they decided to do something about it. Connie, a Stinger parent who regularly works with Yellow Brick House, the local shelter for women and children, saw that a better use for these jerseys might be in giving them a new lease on life on the backs of these kids in need and the Stingers jumped at the chance to help their fellow boys and girls.

?I had a chat with my son and he was thrilled,? said Connie. ?He couldn't pick enough jerseys to give away.?

Added fellow Stinger parent John, ?Some of the families brought in more than one jersey. Some of them brought toys and really got behind the idea. I had a similar conversation with my son too about the importance of acknowledging he is fortunate to have these opportunities, but not everybody else does.

?By helping out he is creating an opportunity for kids who may not otherwise have a chance to participate in some of these activities.?

As the team ramps up their involvement in the community, the U9 Stinger Boys are in the running for the Bank of Montreal's Team of the Week. The boys are looking for community support towards the prestigious program, which recognizes 15 kids' soccer teams from across the country over the summer for their efforts in branching out from the soccer pitch to where they live.

After the Teams of the Week are named through the end of August, they will be in the running for the grand prize which will bring a significant investment in local soccer from the national bank.

The team was nominated by Coach Vince Russo, who hailed his kids for their energy, enthusiasm, and passion for both their game and the community.

?Their positive attitude, love of the game, and friendships with each other can be witnessed on and off the field,? said Mr. Russo in his pitch. ?They practice three times a week and participate in weekly tournaments, always bringing energy, smiles and dedication.?

John is not only a team parent, but also the regional coordinator for the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program. Their involvement within the program has helped drive home the point that Aurora is not strictly an affluent community, but Aurora kids often have very important needs which might be holding them back from being full participants in the community.

?Jumpstart provides the kids with an opportunity to get into sports they wouldn't otherwise have,? said John. ?That is part of the

message we're trying to get to the boys and the families that this is an opportunity for you to help other kids your own age.

?I think the more awareness [BMO Soccer and Jumpstart] get, the more awareness the community gets by extension of that, that there are issues related to poverty in the community.?

Connie agreed, adding that more and more is being done in schools to drive home this point and also make parents aware of the similar problem. She also says going online to voice your support for the Stinger Boys will give the team a good shot in the arm.

?They are positive boys who have lots of energy and the coaches really push that positive energy and have fun,? she says.

?By getting on the website and supporting us and telling their friends about it too, the more people talk about it, the more people are aware there is a need within our community as well as other communities,? adds John.

To support Aurora's U9 Stinger Boys, visit www.bmosoccer.com, click ?Team of the Week? and search for Aurora.