

Student Athletes of the Year recognized by Sport Aurora



36 student athletes from twenty Aurora schools were honored by Sport Aurora at the AFLC on Thursday night.

The ceremony recognized elementary and secondary school students who won Athlete of the Year Awards in June. Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, and Sport Aurora President Ron Weese presented the certificates of recognition to attendees at the upper floor mezzanine of the AFLC.

St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School's top athletes were Quinlan Guillermo and Emmaleigh Sun, St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School named Keria and Fiona Marley as well as Sebastian Torres as their top athletes while Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School applauded the exemplary athletic efforts of Shyla Gamble. Top athletes at Holy Spirit Elementary School were Helena Cooray and Otitochi (Tito) Onyeamchi; Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School's athletes of the year were Victoria Rulli and Rani Kobeissi.

At Northern Lights Public School, Alyssa Davidson and Patrick Alexander Balasoiu captured top athlete awards and Lester B Pearson Public School athletes of the year were Jasmine Acquaah and Julia Danielle Damtsis.

Hartman Public School named Colin Voloceai and Eva Shih as its top athletes of 2023 while Rick Hansen Public School presented awards to Sofie Belova and Christian Blake Bushfield as its best athletes of the year.

Devins Drive Public School named Kaia Higgins and Alfie Ni as its top athletes while Regency Acres Public School distinguished Karson Stickle, Hannah Yaghoobi, and Emek Saridas as their best athletes this year. École élémentaire catholique Saint-Jean awarded Maika Hamdar and Brayden Young the school's top athletic trophies.

At Aurora's four secondary schools, top athletic awards went to these student-athletes: Jonathan Shi, Abigail Lee, Tobechukwu Otoh, Michaela Nicolo, and Blanka Lodi at Cardinal Carter Catholic High School; Mikayla Cranney and Josh Blades at Aurora High School; Maya Weatherall and Adrian Hordatt at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School; and Naomi Rositsan and Jerry Lin at Dr. G.W Williams Secondary School.

Sport Aurora President Ron Weese said he couldn't have been happier with what transpired at the AFLC on Wednesday.

?To see how strong school sports are again in Aurora is the best part of this ceremony. It's great to see the vital importance of sports in our schools and we want to thank all the teacher-coaches for selecting these student-athletes. This is an important presentation.?

Weese noted that, ?This kind of sports celebration can't happen without the schools' help. This night shows the pride these students have in their schools and in the Town.?

When asked how this ceremony helps fulfill Sport Aurora's mandate, Weese acknowledged that "celebration is one of our four big pillars."

"Celebrating our local student-athletes is both aspiring and inspiring," said Weese. "It's great to see that school sports are alive and well in our local elementary and secondary schools. It's so nice to have a public celebration of our young athletes, especially since COVID restricted our organization's ability to host a public event and we had to deliver our recognition certificates to individual homes. It was nice to chat with the families in those circumstances, but celebrating achievements together is a much better communal feeling."

Neil Moore, Sport Aurora's Manager of Public Relations, echoed Weese's remarks about the importance of celebrating the athletic achievements of local student-athletes. Moore noted that "Fall is a busy time for us with so many big events that celebrate sports and recognize our athletes in Aurora."

"The Breakfast of Champions event at Stonehaven Banquet Hall on October 22 will honor an Athlete of the Year and a Coach of the Year," he said. "140 athletes will attend the event and teams that have won a national or provincial championship will also be celebrated."

Moore also highlighted the importance and popularity of "All Sport One Day" which ran on June 17 and will run again on September 9 with a sold-out event."

"It's great to see 80 kids participating in 8 sports for the first time. The event allows parents the opportunity to see their children try new sports they might like to play at a recreational level before fully committing to the sport and buying equipment."

Laurie Mueller, Executive Director and Secretary of Sport Aurora who oversaw the distribution of the recognition certificates on Wednesday evening, segued from Moore's remarks and delineated the organization's initiatives in the coming year: "We hope to build on the success of All Sport One Day and make it into four events in 2024. We applied for a grant that will help boost the popular event to two indoor sports days and two outdoor sports days."

"Thanks to a Magna grant, we will be able to help needy families participate in the sports introduced at All-Sport One Day."

In addition to these noble objectives, Mueller also noted that "Sport Aurora's annual Volunteer Recognition Events would occur on November 5 at Aw Shucks. We'll be thanking at least 18 volunteers for their selfless service to Aurora minor sports organizations."

Based on the popularity of Wednesday's ceremony and their upcoming events this Fall, Sport Aurora continues to play a prominent role in the recreational life of our community and has its heart in the right place when it comes to recognizing the exemplary performances of the Town's student-athletes.

By Jim Stewart