

Caledon's Lawrence gives back to both club and hometown



Written By JAKE COURTEPATTE

A star and mentor both on and off the soccer pitch, it is moments such as those at the Brampton Soccer Centre in late December that really prove Ashley Lawrence's worth.

Fresh off signing a shiny new four-year contract with her Parisian club team Paris St.-Germain just a few days prior, the Caledon East native was hosting the annual Charity Food and Toy Drive for United Way and Knights Table, looking to alleviate hunger in Peel Region.

"Last year it went so well, the reaction from the kids and the families was amazing," she said in an interview with The Canadian Press. "I hope to continue to do events like that. I'm not often in Canada, only in the winter and summer. But for sure there's always time to give back."

Dubbed "YesSheCanada" by Lawrence, the creator of the organization, the event not only collected items but gave girls ages six to 16 what its name implies: the opportunity to learn the game of soccer from Lawrence, who has long used her celebrity to be an advocate for women's role in sports.

The 23-year old, who saw her soccer star rise as a member of the bronze medal-winning Team Canada at the 2016 Rio Olympics, helped the Canadian senior team to World Cup qualification at the CONCACAF World Cup qualification tournament in mid-October. She was one of several red and white teammates to represent Canada at the group draw shortly after.

She told the Canadian Press it is her time wearing the maple leaf that has brought her to the level of leadership, athleticism, and humility few athletes have accomplished.

"I try to bring my experience from the national team," she said. "Whether it's on the field, off the field, just being that voice and adding that energy? I really learned that with Canada."

"I think for me it's how can I impact the player next to me?"

A clear mind and clear heart brought her to a deal through 2023 with the Paris St.-Germain club, of who she is currently in her second season with.

?I'm very excited,? Lawrence said. ?I think for me and most players as you're reaching the end of your contract you start to think of what your next decision will be, your next move.

?For me it was great because I'm happy here in Paris. It took some time to adjust with the language, with the culture, but I can confidently say now that I've adjusted well. This is the right place for me to continue my development as a player.?