

Caledon farmer memorialized through weekend charity hockey tournament

By Jake Courtepatte

What better way to honour a Canadian farmer than with a good ol' game of hockey.

That is just how family, friends, and teammates have chosen to memorialize Donna deBoer, with the fourth annual Udder Tournament taking place at Caledon East over the weekend.

Mrs. deBoer was raised on a dairy farm in Caledon, studying agriculture at the University of Guelph before returning home to the rural lifestyle. She, along with her husband Nick and brother Dan, took over the family farm in 2010.

In late 2011, she lost her life due to complications from brain cancer.

As an avid athlete, involved in both baseball and hockey, Mrs. deBoer was a founding member of the Caledon Women's Hockey League. She took up the sport in 1982, despite being quite shaky on a pair of hockey skates.

And just after the first anniversary of her passing, the Udder Tournament was born.

Four years later, the tournament has raised more than \$50,000 for charity, part of which goes to the Donna deBoer Memorial Scholarship Fund, a scholarship available to all Caledon area female hockey players.

Fifty per cent of this year's proceeds will be supporting the Vera Davis Wheelchair Bus Fund, an effort to raise money to purchase a new wheelchair-accessible bus for the Vera Davis Community Centre in Bolton.

This year's total raised is still being counted.

While 24 teams took to the ice for the competition, the weekend-long tournament also offered an array of food, drinks and music, as well as a silent auction with prizes ranging from hockey memorabilia to golf outings.

Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson was at the arena Saturday to take in some of the action, and offer his take on the fourth incarnation of the tournament.

"This tournament is great," said Thompson. "It's gotten bigger, better, every year. A lot of people did a lot of work to put it together, and it just shows the impact Donna had on the community. I can't think of a better person to remember with this tournament."

Mrs. deBoer's husband Nick, a member of Town council, looks forward to the event each year.

"When the ladies of the league came forward with the idea in the first year, I thought it was great," he said. "The focus of it is fun. We've got people from as far away as Owen Sound and Niagara Falls, and every place in between. The fact that Donna's baseball team is here enjoying hockey that some of them never played until four years ago . . . it's great to see so many people taking their time to be here."