

Kala's Wings softball tournament brought attention to suicide and survivors

By Brian Lockhart

The second annual Kala's Wings Co-ed Softball Tournament got underway at Rotary Park in Orangeville on Saturday, July 15, to bring attention to suicide awareness.

Over 100 players and ten teams took part in the tournament, which featured a full day of action on the diamonds, with each team playing a minimum of four games.

The top teams went into a playoff round and a championship game.

Organizers Jon Castellano, Don Menard, and Chris Widdop were happy with the turnout and enthusiasm of all the players.

The tournament is a fundraiser for a local family that has been affected by suicide.

Kala's Wings was first held five years ago, but the pandemic put things on hold until this year.

"We did the first tournament in 2018," Don explained. "COVID wouldn't allow us to do it again so we're bringing it back this year. In 2018, I lost my daughter to suicide. We want to raise awareness that it's happening out there too much. We're raising money and part of the proceeds will go to a family that has been impacted similar to how my family was impacted. This is strictly a hand-to-hand fundraiser."

Don's daughter was only 27 years old and a single mother with two children. While the children were left with nothing, a trust fund was started to help them with the future, and now Don wants to help another family in the same way.

"The kids were left with nothing," Don explained. "They got a trust fund in 2018, that we started for them, so we want to do the same for another family that was impacted the same way we were."

The tournament was organized in two divisions. One division was for more serious and competitive players, and the other division was for those who played on a more recreational level.

"They're guaranteed four teams, and then it becomes elimination," Don said. "Potentially they can play six if they win the semis and go to the final."

Games were limited to seven innings or 50 minutes to keep the tournament moving with a constant rotation of games on the diamonds.

There was a home run derby held at the south diamond between the round-robin and tournament play. Each hitter was allowed ten balls to see could do the most over the fence.

There were prizes, a raffle, and the Taphouse donated its time, providing food and beverages for the day.

Organizers are hoping to have an even bigger tournament next year.