

# Karen Hamilton Field unveiled at opening ceremonies of the ECSA volunteer's inaugural Memorial Softball Tournament

**By Jim Stewart**

The legacy of a longtime Caledon East resident's selfless volunteer spirit was recognized formally during the Opening Ceremonies of the inaugural Karen Hamilton Memorial Softball Tournament last month.

The Lions Diamond at Caledon East Park was renamed Karen Hamilton Field on June 7 to honor the dedicated Caledon East Softball Association coach, executive, and umpire who passed away in 2022 at 79 after a battle with Alzheimer's.

Hamilton's daughter, Kelly McCaffrey, reflected on the poignant unveiling ceremony.

"Having so many people come out and share it with us was the best part of the day. People who knew mom and dad turned out for the 8 a.m. event that we used to kick off the Memorial Tournament. Despite how early it was, so many came out to support mom and dad and the event. I wish mom could have seen this?although she didn't do her volunteer work for the recognition.?"

The inaugural Karen Hamilton Memorial Softball Tournament was an unbridled success.

As McCaffrey noted, "We raised \$3,000 at our first tournament. \$1,500 was donated to the Alzheimer's Society and \$1,500 was donated to the Avalon Care Centre which was used to purchase a comfortable recliner chair in the palliative care ward. A plaque by the chair will be inscribed with Mom's name on it.?"

As one of the tournament organizers, McCaffrey described how each tournament participant was "given a t-shirt and a custom koozie with the tournament logo and date on it. The proceeds from BBQ, which was run by volunteers, contributed to our fundraising total as did local businesses in both Caledon East and Bolton who were so generous.?"

"In Bolton, SportCheck, Princess Auto, Canadian Tire, Home Hardware, and Party Magic donated raffle prizes which really helped our fundraising. Caledon East businesses that donated prizes and food for players in the tournament included Airport Pizza, Gabe's Country Bake Shop, Foodland Caledon East, and the Caledon East General Store Variety and Convenience.?"

McCaffrey's own organizational acumen reinforced the adage that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Karen Hamilton's daughter remembered with much fondness her mom's "organizational abilities and her meticulous nature.?"

"She was generous and humble and she was an amazing seamstress, too. She made bridal gowns and bridal party dresses and could make last-minute alterations for brides and bridesmaids?she thrived on challenges.?"

One of those challenges was to create a softball league for young players who had aged out of the association's youth leagues but wanted to continue playing recreational ball.

"Mom saw the need for a league so she developed a mixed three-pitch league for the married players and players in their twenties. The mixed league grew into twelve teams with over 150 players. It was perfect for young couples who wanted to play a sport together and have fun. Mom never did anything for herself. She loved working with people and when she found out that a Caledon bantam softball team didn't have another team to play in their age bracket, she found teams from other nearby towns and they created an inter-town league.

"She did all this for the kids in the Town to ensure they had an outlet and to keep them out of trouble. She even provided transportation for the players who couldn't get themselves to the other towns in the league. She also took her turns running a snack

bar at the Lions Park for over thirty years and between her bus runs, she would shop for cases of pop so the snack bar would be well-stocked with drinks for the kids.?

Hamilton? a Caledon East resident for more than 55 years and a school bus driver for decades? joined the Caledon East Softball Association executive to assist with House League schedule-making, uniform procurement, to organize season-ending banquets, and, when necessary, devoted time behind the plate as an umpire.

McCaffrey offered insights into Hamilton's love of umpiring.

?There were no on-line courses at the time so Mom took qualification courses at weekend seminars organized by the provincial association. She knew all the rules? the infield fly rule was her favorite to call or explain when needed. She knew it inside and out.?

McCaffery and her family learned about municipal protocols inside and out when they presented Caledon Town Council with an on-line petition filled with 340 signatures in January 2024 to rename the Lions Diamond at East Caledon Park to Karen Hamilton Field.

Despite some resistance to the renaming of the park due to a municipal policy that discouraged naming Town assets after people, the Hamilton family was undaunted by this kind of technicality.

The success of the Hamiltons' presentation to Council in July 2024 was the result of timely and expert help from one Councillor in particular. According to McCaffrey, ?Nick DeBoer was fantastic. He was a totally supportive. Nick helped us work out the fine points of how to prepare for a Council meeting. He knew the family personally and we appreciated his help.?

In November 2024, Council passed a motion unanimously to rename the Lions Diamond to honor the memory of Karen Hamilton's contributions to the softball community of East Caledon.