

Peel CAS partner with Caledon OPP to bring MLSE House of Hockey program to Caledon

By Riley Murphy, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment's (MLSE) House of Hockey program will be coming to Caledon for the first time this summer in partnership with the Caledon OPP.

The program is offered through Peel Children's Aid Society's (CAS) Trailblazers Youth Centre and will focus on fitness to help ensure physical, mental, and emotional well-being, while also building social skills.

This is now the third consecutive year that Peel CAS has been named a site for the Toronto Maple Leafs' House of Hockey League.

This year, the program is available to families in Caledon.

The ball hockey program will provide equipment, jerseys, sticks, merchandise and skills coaches to teach players basic hockey fundamentals for youth ages eight to fifteen at no cost.

The program will take place from July 31 to August 28.

Rosa Micieli, Supervisor, Parent & Child Capacity Building, Caledon Team, shared that keeping the program free of charge allows Caledon youth to feel both safe and supported.

"We're building preventative focus programs to enhance child safety and family well-being throughout Caledon, and programs like ball hockey really promote safety by building positive relationships, teaching teamwork, and encouraging respectful behavior," said Micieli. "It also strengthens the Caledon community to bring families together and allow the children and youth to feel a sense of belonging and it's a shared responsibility. It really takes a village for our children and youth to succeed and to feel supported."

One of the youth from Peel CAS will be leading the program, which Micieli shared is a great way to bring the community together.

She shared that she hopes this program coming to Caledon will open doors for more in the future.

"Having been the supervisor for the last eight years and listening to families and my frontline staff, one of the things that's been brought to my attention over and over again is 'when are we going to have something for the youth and children?' Something that's affordable, that's easy for them to attend and that they feel supported, and so I thought let's give this a try and see where it goes from there," she said.

She shared that, as Caledon is growing at such a rapid rate, it's essential to have these types of programs available.

"A lot of the programs are outside of Caledon and transportation at times can be a barrier.

Having things situated in Caledon will really make a difference, and Caledon deserves it," said Micieli.

House of Hockey is one of the many programs they are able to support with the OPP and Peel Regional Police as part of Peel's Community Safety and Well-being Plan.

Micieli emphasized that Peel CAS strives to ensure the safety and well-being of the community's most vulnerable individuals, with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion when working with families through wraparound services and culturally competent care.

Through this, they can support the Caledon Community.

"We work with families to determine the kind of support that they need and we advocate for them. We link them up with the appropriate community services that are actually located in the Town of Caledon and 99 per cent of our work is done with families and children in their own homes."

Mieli's Caledon Team collaborates with various community organizations in the Town to assess the needs of families, offer interactive and educational programs for youth, and support families early on.

Their team has been able to support families through BrightStart Caledon, the Albion Bolton Community Centre, Southfields Community Centre, and the Caledon East Community Centre.

She shared that she is grateful they can work alongside the Caledon OPP and Caledon Dufferin Victim Services, as these services allow them to provide families with the support they need.

The Trailblazers Youth Centre, through which the program is offered, was created by Peel CAS to implement a more innovative and equitable service delivery model.

It is created and led by the youth, allowing them to access services so they can feel supported, that they belong, and build lifelong connections while positioning themselves as leaders.

Often, Mieli said, the youth are the ones leading these programs.

This is what the House of Hockey program showcases.

The program will be held at the Caledon OPP Detachment at 15924 Innis Lake Rd, Caledon East.

For more information on Peel CAS programs, visit www.peelcas.org.