

Press Release

Girl's Silver Stick hockey tournament announced

Teams from Ontario and U.S. coming to Aurora for championship event

AURORA (January 18, 2019): Players, coaches and league officials gathered at the Aurora Community Centre Thursday night as the Central York Girls Hockey Association (CYGHA) announced plans and provided background on the 20th Annual Aurora Girls International Silver Stick Tournament to be held Feb. 1-3.

The tournament will include 52 teams at the Atom and Bantam rep levels, from throughout Ontario, as well as three teams from the U.S. – Anaheim Lady Ducks, St. Clair Shores, Michigan, and Colorado Rocky Mountain Lady Riders – along with six host teams from the Aurora Panthers.

“Our event is called the Silver Stick Finals,” said Bruce Bennett, schedule and tournament marshal for the past 15 years. “There are regional tournaments held across North America, but regional champions all send their players to this tournament. Which is why we have teams from California and Colorado.”

He added that during his tenure, they’ve hosted teams from 11 states, including Alaska, Michigan, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania. “One year, we even had Mario Lemieux’s daughter. We were hoping Mario would show up!”

The first Silver Stick was held in 1958, a four-team tournament involving Bantam and Peewee players from Potsdam, New York and South Carleton, Ontario (near Ottawa). It has grown into North America’s largest minor hockey tournament, now hosting more than 65,000 players and coaches annually.

Its history is more recent in Aurora – 20 years in 2019 – but some organizers have been with it from early days, and player families are now seeing a second generation lace up for Silver Stick.

“I’ve been involved since Day One with the tournament,” said Don Bailkowski, who has served as treasurer, co-director, and currently tournament statistician. He noted there were initial challenges, with some volunteers and teams not showing up, but their first efforts still netted 40 teams – more than enough for a successful event.

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Aurora Panthers players, coaches and league officials gathered at the Aurora Community Centre on January 16th to launch this year's Silver Stick tournament: February 1,2 and 3.

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"We initially had only Atom and Bantam A and AA divisions," said Bennett. "About five years ago, we added the BB divisions – and we now have teams on waiting lists."

"Despite much of the crowd being player families and friends, interest in the tournament continues to be strong," said Bailkowski. "One growth area is the number of scouts from both Canadian and US universities, interested in watching the Bantam AA games (Age: 13 & 14 years). It's the highest level for girls of that age."

Aurora Silver Stick will take place Feb. 1 and 2 at the Aurora Community Centre (ACC) and Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex; and on Feb. 3 (playoffs) at the ACC. Silver Stick is a free event, with opening ceremonies and the official puck-drop on Friday, Feb. 1 at 4:00 p.m. Hockey-related displays will be featured at both locations, and a unique silent auction will be held at the ACC until 3 pm on Saturday Feb. 2.

For more information about the 20th Annual Silver Stick Tournament, hosted by the Central York Girls Hockey League, please contact CYGHA Administrator, Patty Albert at info@cygha.com, or visit the website at www.cygha.com.



Aurora Panthers players gather for the announcement of the 20th Annual Silver Stick in Aurora.

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About Sport Aurora:

Founded in 2005, Sport Aurora is a not-for-profit corporation that supports and develops high-quality sport and recreation opportunities. They advocate on behalf of member organizations to increase participation, build capacity and celebrate excellence. Sport Aurora now represents 31 sport organizations, with a volunteer base of more than 2,500, and a player base of nearly 10,000 from ages of 3 to 80. Sport Aurora has also helped develop the municipal Parks and Recreation Master Plan, continues to provide leadership and guidance, and has become the "voice" of Sport in the Town of Aurora. For more information, visit <http://www.sportaurora.ca/>

About Activate Aurora:

Activate Aurora is on a mission: to make Aurora "Canada's Most Active Community" through education, activities and awareness. This Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) funded program was designed by Sport Aurora with the guidance of the Canadian Sport for Life Society, and is endorsed – and supported – by the Mayor's Task Force on Physical Activity. The Activate Aurora team includes representatives from diverse areas of interest: local sports organizations, education, parks & recreation, seniors and health care. For more information, visit <https://activateaurora.com/>

About CYGHA:

Central York Girls Hockey Association (CYGHA) represents women from ages 4-65+ in the communities of Aurora, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, East Gwillimbury and Bradford. The 2018 season roster will include 968 female hockey players in both the House League and Rep levels.