

Jennifer Widbur tournament calling it quits after 12 years, \$500,000 raised



By Brian Lockhart

After 12 years of planning and running the Jennifer Widbur Memorial Hockey Tournament, event organizers have said this year's event will be the last one.

It's not that they are giving up. In fact this tournament hosted by the Honeywood Hockey Moms has gone well above and beyond anyone's expectations when it began in 2008.

The Tournament has raised over \$500,000. That's an incredible amount of money for a small community, and they have made a difference in the lives of many people along the way. A main recipient of the funds raised was the Cancer Care Centre at the Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville.

"For Headwaters, we're at over \$510,000," said Tournament Chair and organizer. Mike deLaat. "We're over \$50,000 per year raised in this tournament. We contributed to the digital mammography imaging system. They've gotten away from X-rays which makes diagnostics so much better. That helps with early detection" and that was our first goal. We toured the oncology unit. Headwaters' goal was to improve what they had. That's when their \$15 million build program began, to build that new wing. We have added to that to help put in improved equipment to help make things better. We gave funds to be used where it's needed most in cancer care."

Over the years the Tournament has also contributed to Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, helped fund minor hockey and contributed to several other local causes.

Planning and running the Tournament requires a lot of work, and organizers decided that time had run its course for this particular event.

"You don't want to hold an event until it fizzles out," Mr. deLaat said. "You know you want to end on a high note. A couple of years ago we asked, 'what is our end game?' We know we can't do this forever. We're not getting the 30-year-old players and the 50-year-old's aren't coming back. It's becoming more of a challenge to get teams together. With that in mind we decided to pick some number that is outrageous, like \$500,000, and we did that last year. We've got a good formula. It works well. It's a well-known, well-respected, well-played, and well-supported tournament. But sooner or later you've got to know it's time. So after 12 years and \$500,000, it's a pretty good time to go. We're leaving a good legacy and we're proud of what we've done."

This year's tournament had 15 teams entered in both a recreational and competitive division.

While this annual tournament will not continue, Mr. deLatt said that if anyone else decided to pick up the torch and carry on, he would be happy to help them get started.