

## Spenser's Kids: helping underprivileged kids play hockey

By Tabitha Wells - Local communities in Dufferin County were shattered last March at the news of six-year-old Spenser McFadyen's tragic death in a car accident on Highway 9. The accident sent waves of sadness throughout the community, as Spenser was well-loved and well-known through his participation in Orangeville Minor Hockey. During his memorial service, there was rarely a moment that there wasn't a line out the door of individuals touched by the situation wanting to pay their respects.

The loss of a child can be devastating to a parent and a community, and knowing how to help their memory live on without remaining drowned by grief can be a difficult thing to figure out. But Spenser's light to the world and the joy he gave to others helped fuel an organization that would allow his memory to live on in the best of ways - the creation of a non-profit, called Spenser's Kids, designed to help under-privileged kids have the chance to experience playing hockey.

"The concept was originally designed by a group of volunteer firefighters that I work with, as well as family members, following the accident," explained Dave McFadyen, Spenser's father. "After they had the idea together, they presented it to me, and the whole thing seemed to just take off like wildfire."

The Spenser's Kids trailer has been seen at most events across town throughout the last several months, and it's hard to find anyone in town that isn't aware of their mission. The green shirts with Spenser's number have become a symbol of memory and a beacon of hope to many in the area.

"The town has just backed us 100 percent, and they haven't stopped doing so to date," said Mr. McFadyen. "We've done many events in the area and we're starting to sell merchandise to help raise money."

He added that a lot of businesses in town have also been extremely welcoming to Spenser's Kids and their mission, and have been helping with pricing, donations and other needs the non-profit has had.

"I really have to say thank you to the community. The whole purpose of Spenser's Kids is to keep Spenser alive and keep his spirits going," said Mr. McFadyen. "My goal, as Spenser's father, is just to put one kid into hockey each year who couldn't otherwise have that opportunity. This community has been a part of that and will help to keep his memory alive and help to keep him on the ice."

While the group aimed to get one kid on the ice, fully equipped and with a paid registration, thanks to the donations made by the community, they were able to put nine kids into Orangeville Minor Hockey for the start of the season this year.

"This year, we've already been able to put nine kids in Orangeville Minor Hockey, which is incredible," said Mr. McFadyen. "It's been overwhelming and this has been far greater than I ever expected."

Spenser's Kids teamed up with Orangeville Minor Hockey and Dufferin Child and Family Services to help determine the candidates who would benefit from this the most. The selected children came from both the Shelburne and Orangeville areas, and were decided on between the three organizations.

"For me, the joy on the kids' and parents' faces, knowing their children will be able to play hockey this year makes this all worth it," said Mr. McFadyen. "The look on the little guys' faces was priceless. I now basically have nine kids to go and watch play hockey. My goal was one, and we helped nine. This is an amazing way to keep Spenser alive through these kids."