

Rockhounds and Jets join forces to raise awareness of Dress Purple Day



By Nate Smelle

The North Hastings Community Centre is once again abuzz with the sounds of hockey. Along with the cheerful atmosphere around the rink, the recent return of hockey to Bancroft has also inspired a new community partnership. Over the weekend members of the Bancroft Jr. A Rockhounds squad took to the ice to share their knowledge and love of the game with some of the future stars of the Bancroft District Minor Hockey Association. Not only did the young players get a chance to learn from their on-ice mentors, together they used the opportunity to raise awareness of the services that the Children's Aid Society offers families throughout North Hastings.

As a showing of solidarity with the Children's Aid Society's Dress Purple Day campaign, members of the Rockhounds met with players from the IP/U-7 age category to tape their sticks purple. While getting their sticks taped, the kids were also able to talk hockey with the Rockhounds, and figure out which position they want to play.

During the month of October, Children's Aid Societies across the province focus on raising awareness of the important role that individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families as part of the annual Dress Purple Day campaign.

The local initiative got started when BDMHA board member Missy Bodden came up with an idea to bring the players together and have them promote CAS and their work helping local children and families. Although Dress Purple Day doesn't officially take place until Wednesday, Oct. 27, she said local supporters have decorated the Town of Bancroft with purple ribbons to keep the campaign

going throughout the entire month of October.

The awareness raising campaign was initially launched by CAS in 1992. Originally known as the purple ribbon campaign Dress Purple Day started as a local community initiative in the Greater Toronto Area, focused on child abuse education. Since its inception, the campaign has evolved into a province-wide, month-long campaign designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month by the Ontario legislature in 2017.

Erin Beatty is CAS executive coordinator of therapeutic family care and co-chair of the Dress Purple committee. She said the campaign serves as a reminder to community service providers about the importance of early support and intervention for families that are struggling. The campaign also encourages Ontarians to do their part in supporting vulnerable families in their local community, explained Beatty. She said Dress Purple Day, is a way for people to celebrate the community that cares for families, and share the message that help is available and no one is alone.

Youth have a right to safety and well-being in all the spaces they occupy, including home, school, and sport, Beatty said. Safety includes physical as well as psychological, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual well-being.

For children and youth who do not have an adult in their life that they trust, Beatty said there are many organizations there to provide the support and services needed. Some of the organizations standing by to offer their assistance include: Children's Aid Societies; Kids Help Phone; Naseeha Youth Helpline; Black Youth Helpline; and, LGBT Youthline.

Anyone wishing to support the campaign can make a donation online at: www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday. Another way for people to help is by sharing their own photos of themselves wearing purple on social media with the hashtags: #idresspurple; #dresspurpleday; #DressPurpleDay2021; and, #IDressPurpleBecause.