

North Hastings takes another run at Kraft Hockeyville



By Bill Kilpatrick

When Meredith Card heard that the North Hastings Community Centre's future was possibly in jeopardy, she decided that she had to act. She wanted to do something that not only would help the community centre, but she also was looking for something positive that would 'change the climate' in town and allow people to participate in exciting and fun events where they could make lasting memories. 'I didn't want to focus on anything negative and I didn't want to get into the politics of anything,' said Card, 'I thought how can we help?' Her answer was to once again nominate the North Hastings Community Centre for Kraft Hockeyville and on Feb. 5 she submitted the nomination story. 'I've been at the North Hastings Community Centre since I was a kid,' said Card, 'and we need to come together to make sure that it's still there and Kraft Hockeyville seems like a great solution.' The top prize for Hockeyville is \$250,000 towards arena upgrades and the chance to host a NHL game, while the second, third, and fourth place finishers get \$25,000 towards their arenas. Card, whose son Max plays hockey at the arena, was quick to point out that this is not just about hockey, 'The arena is for everybody. It's for the public skaters. It's for the people who use it for ball hockey in the summer, the concerts, the Rockhound Gemboree, and figure skating,' explained Card. While she is part of the Bancroft Minor Hockey board, Card said that this is not a fundraiser that has been initiated by the board, but by her as a concerned parent who 'just wants to help.' In her submission to Kraft Hockeyville Card spoke about her concerns that the arena might close and the impact that it would have given the geographical isolation of North Hastings stating, 'Bancroft is situated almost an hour from any other hockey centre. We draw in from a large region to fill our teams as the area is large and spread out. If we were to close our doors, we wouldn't be able to ensure our kids have access to hockey anymore.' The loss of the arena was a theme that ran through almost all of the nomination stories, but another theme was the importance of the arena as the life blood of the community. One submission spoke about all the important community activities that occur along with the sports events at the arena, 'It is a meeting space and a hub in our community. The relationships built in that building go well beyond hockey or figure skating. It is a space where we support and build each other up as adults [and] where job offers are extended, lifelong friendships are formed, and inspiration takes hold. The North Hastings Community Centre is just that, the centre of our community. It is where responsibility is learned, leadership is built, cooperation is fostered, and where all of that happens while building memories of fun that last a lifetime.' Another submission talked about the connections made there as well, 'The arena was like a second home growing up and the community there was like family. [?] There is only one indoor ice surface in Bancroft and it's such a valued and vital part of the community.' Other submissions cited the community spirit stating, 'This is the best community ever. The team and community spirit is second to none,' and it is this community spirit that Card is hoping to tap into once again like in 2011 when Bancroft made a run at the Hockeyville prize. It's the community spirit that gives Card hope and optimism for the arena's future, 'I don't ever see it closing,' said Card, 'I think our community will rally together.' She pointed out that 'Change happens when things get uncomfortable [?]' and it's really brought everybody's perspective [back to the fact that] we need to put some focus on this [the arena] from multiple different areas. We need to put a political focus on it, we need to come at this as a community, and we need to think about doing some fundraisers to

help out a little bit. I think the last fundraiser for the community centre was back in 2011," said Card. Card admitted that North Hastings was a little "late for the party" in terms of their chances at moving on to the second round for Hockeyville given that she only submitted the initial nomination on Feb. 5, whereas the nomination and rally period began on Jan. 1 and closed on Feb. 18. The judging period runs from Feb. 19 to March 9, when Hockeyville will announce the top 4, but regardless of whether or not Kraft Hockeyville is successful, Card is looking to the future for other fundraisers to help out at the arena. She is currently looking at putting on a dance in collaboration with Eric Abrahams and Kirsten Batsford who own the Maplehaus in Palmer Rapids, and who also currently run the canteen at the community centre. "He proposed that we run a big fundraising dance at the community centre after the ice goes out and make it big and fun," said Card. While no date has been set for the dance Card is hoping that this will just be the start of many fundraising events for the community centre over 2024. "I think we've been missing that fun stuff over the last few years too," observed Card, who remarked, "I think it will just benefit everybody." For anyone looking to help with fundraising Card can be contacted at nhcckrafthockeyville@gmail.com or for more information on Kraft Hockeyville visit: <https://hockeyville.kraftcanada.ca/#/landing>.