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Local Hamilton Basketball Referees Make Young Player's Dream Come True

The following is a story from Don MacVicar, Director of the Inner City Outreach Ministry in Hamilton, Ontario regarding their annual basketball tournament.



For the past 25 years the Rev Helen Allum has donated funds to host a basketball tournament all for fun for the youth of the Inner City of Hamilton....each a year a cheque for \$500.00 quietly shows up in the mail with a wonderful greeting. Helen also donated a trophy and all of the boys receive a medal...from the Inner City Outreach Ministry.

The Basketball tournament is a collection of Teens ages 8 to 14 and 15 to 19....Junior and Senior teams, are mostly pick up teams from the local neighbourhood - one of the most impoverished areas in all of Ontario. We buy jerseys and have food and host the tournament in the Dofasco rec park. It is an NBA size gym with glass boards and the parents come out to watch their children play.

We have always had *Mario Suffoletta* provide referees for this tournament, and the two referees run solid for the 3 hours, as we try and fit as many 12 min games in that time frame and have a double knock you tournament. The referees have always been so good to the teens all of these years as they actually do on the floor coaching, helping them out with the rules as some boys have never played organized sports.

The game is as exciting as any NBA final. The three pointers go up and in and the fellows cheer and encourage each other. This is a moment for them to be away from the struggles in the Inner City as over the years some have been in trouble with the law and kicked out of school and a host of other sad stories...but they are the best kids in the city. Their eyes are wide eyed when they see the jersey or medals they all going to win.

The last tournament I was taken aback by the generosity of the referees...**Willie Brown** and his dad **Dave Brown** had run for three hours solid and as they were gathering their gear, quietly Willie said “*could our fee go towards number 12 to buy him some basketball shoes*”. Willie noticed he only had flat canvas shoes on.

I later approached the lad and said by the way the referees picked you as the player of the game and you have a gift card for a new pair of shoes at the local sports store. His eyes lit up with joy.

So it was a day to be remembered...

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