

Stars team up to help the homeless

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Hockey for the Homeless will host its first-annual tournament here Nov. 28 to raise money for the city's down and out. The event will feature NHL-alumni such as Fleury, Jim Peplinski, Jamie Macoun and Joel Otto playing aside Calgarians.

Players are still welcome to join the three-game tournament for a fee of \$400, which includes a hockey bag, lunch and dinner banquet -- as well as spending quality time with the pros.

"You get a chance to raise money for the homeless, but you also get a chance to play with former NHL players," says Carl Mindzak, a local organizer. "It's a bit of a hockey camp dream. You walk into the dressing room and they have a jersey and you dress up for the day like you're a member of a big team; your name's on the jersey and you get the chance to share stories and spend the day with NHL alumni."

Hockey for the Homeless was started in 1996 by a group of Toronto businessmen who were looking for a way to raise money for a problem that was growing out of control. The group was aiming to raise \$2,000 but topped \$8,500 that first year. Since then, the tournament has grown to include Montreal and has raised more than \$1.5 million.

Tournaments were held in Toronto and Montreal on Friday, raising \$320,000. The program has done so

well -- it was even mentioned on CBC's Hockey Night in Canada -- the organization decided to expand the one-day event to every Canadian city with an NHL team, said Sean Berry, director of operations.

This year, the organization is also holding events in Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa and Calgary.

"We know the model works and we know (homelessness) is a problem across Canada. Hockey is obviously in everybody's culture and Calgary is another hockey-mad town. We just think the marriage of hockey and help is a beautiful thing," says Berry.

The Calgary organizing committee is aiming to raise \$80,000. The money will be used to provide emergency kits, which include a tuque, gloves, sleeping bag, toiletries and coupons for meals at city restaurants. As well, donations will be made to Calgary homelessness organizations for reintegration and infrastructure projects.

"It really hits home that it's a problem in Calgary, especially in winter when it's really cold," says Mindzak.

"For me, I drive across the city and I see homelessness pretty much every day. How deep is the problem? It's there and we need to take action against it."

A silent auction will be held at the end of the night. Guests will have a chance to bid on sports memorabilia, Flames and Hitmen tickets, golf packages around the city and week-long stays at condos in Panorama and Palm Springs.

The event will take place at the Don Hartman North East Sportsplex from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a dinner and reception to follow.

To register as a player or make a donation, just go online at hockeyforthehomeless.com.

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