Council Direction:

Not applicable.

Information:

Hamilton’s first homeless baseball league launched in May 2009. The league currently has two to four teams with approximately 30-60 participants per day with the ability to expand, depending on the interest that develops throughout the season. This league is modelled after the City of Toronto’s league. It includes men, women and youth who are currently homeless and/or have a history of homelessness.

The league has been made possible through the collaboration and in-kind contributions from the City of Hamilton’s Recreation and Housing Divisions, a grant from the Hamilton Community Foundation and staffing resources contributed by Wesley Urban Ministries, Mission Services Men’s Residence, Good Shepherd Centres and the Street Youth Planning Collaborative.

A Hostels to Homes (H2H) participant read an article in a June 2008 issue of the Toronto Sun about a homeless baseball league that the City of Toronto runs, in partnership with the City’s homeless service providers, and suggested that a league be organized in Hamilton. Toronto’s homeless baseball league has 10 teams and has existed for approximately 20 years.

Key features of Hamilton’s league are as follows:

- Wesley Urban Ministries as organizational lead and Transfer Payment Agency (TPA) for funds secured for league operations.
League oversight by an Advisory Committee comprised of all league partners, including:
- Recreation Division;
- Hostels to Homes Pilot (Housing Division);
- Wesley Urban Ministries;
- Good Shepherd Men’s Centre;
- Good Shepherd Women’s Services;
- Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes Inc.;
- Mission Services Men’s Residence; and,
- Street Youth Planning Collaborative.

League coordination and daily operations contributed in-kind through H2H.

Diamonds (Eastwood Park) contributed in-kind through the City of Hamilton.

League Assistant and Umpires recruited through pool of potential players and offered training and supervision, thus providing skills development and employment opportunities.

No cost for players.

Zero tolerance policy for substance-use onsite and during the timeframe of game play.

Seasonal/annual costs include such things as league liability insurance, special events and league assistant and umpire fees. One-time start-up costs for equipment totalling $3,120 have been funded through the H2H Program. Annualized fixed costs to run the league is $2,878 for liability insurance, the umpires and the co-ordinator assistant is being funded by the Immediate Response Fund from the Hamilton Community Foundation this year. The league has secured $500 from the Hamilton Tiger Cat Trust Fund to offset the expense of water, sunscreen, etc. The Hamilton Homeless Baseball League has attained approximately $13,992 through in-kind contributions, which includes things such as staffing resources, trainers, the use of baseball diamonds, meeting rooms, transportation, transportation insurance, printing resources and storage.

In terms of recreation, the homeless population is generally overlooked. Starting a baseball league will provide men, women and youth with an opportunity to engage in something they otherwise would not be able to participate in due to the barriers they face. League members will be given an opportunity to have fun and reap the many benefits associated with team recreational sports in an environment in which they feel comfortable (i.e., with others who are or have been homeless). This league will also provide currently homeless individuals with an opportunity to engage with individuals that have previously been homeless that are now housed. The opportunity to witness first-hand the positive changes in the lives of individuals who have moved beyond homelessness to stable housing and to hear from these individuals, over time and in a
non-threatening environment will be an invaluable opportunity for the men, women and youth who continue to face homelessness.

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Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department