

Whitchurch-Stouffville children and teens who don't know how to skate can learn free of charge beginning in January, thanks to ongoing efforts from the Kids First Fund which is sponsored by many generous donations from local families and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Legacy Fund and supported by Hockey Canada.

This Learn to Skate program is aimed at children aged 5 to 7 years old who want to learn the fundamentals of skating. A second program will be offered for children aged 8 to 14 years old who are interested in coming to try hockey (who have never played hockey before).

Spots fill up quickly for these programs and once all spots are filled, we will continue to add to a wait list.

The program is currently in its third year and "it's been amazing," according to Peter Harmsen of the Kids First Fund. "To see the sheer joy on the faces of these kids and their parents has been totally gratifying. We have as many family members in the stands watching their children skate as we do for our minor hockey games. The parents are happy. Some are asking about next steps, including playing hockey. Others asked about lessons for adults who didn't know how to skate."

"It's all about building community through skating. We know there are kids and teens in Stouffville who have never been on skates. We want to give them that opportunity to hopefully pick up a pastime they can enjoy for the rest of their lives."

Beginning January 15, 2025, the program includes eight sessions held Wednesdays from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. (Learn to Skate) at the Stouffville Clippers Sports Complex, 120 Weldon Road, Stouffville. Come Try Hockey will run from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

A maximum of 35 participants will be enrolled for each session. Please note that you are not guaranteed a spot in the program until you have received an email confirmation sent from kidsfirst@wsmha.com (please continue to check your junk mail folder). We will need confirmation back for your child's participation.

Priority will also be given to residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Participants will spend one hour on ice each week with a very high ratio of instructors to skaters. Instructors will include facilitators from the Ontario Minor Hockey Association Coaching Program.

Mandatory equipment for Learn to Skate:

In order to be on the ice are skates, a neck guard and a CSA approved hockey style helmet. Additional equipment such as elbow pads, gloves/wrist guards, shin guards/knee pads are all optional.

Mandatory equipment for Come Try Hockey:

Full hockey equipment is required:

- CSA approved hockey helmet with full cage
- mouth guard
- neck guard
- shoulder pads
- elbow pads
- hockey gloves
- jock/jill
- hockey pants
- shin pads
- skates
- hockey socks and
- hockey stick.

Used equipment is a great option. You may consider looking on Facebook buy and sell pages or stores such as Play It Again.

“They’ll learn the fundamentals of skating,” said Harmsen. “And we hope this program will encourage them to come and try hockey with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association. It allows children who are unsure about playing hockey the opportunity to try without committing to an entire season.

“But if they never play hockey, they’ll know how to skate.”