



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free Sporting Equipment During COVID-19 Pandemic

The County of Middlesex and local Municipalities, in partnership with Middlesex Dairy Producers, have found a way to support local children in being active during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Play it Forward program, eligible Middlesex County families with children between the ages of 3 to 17 years of age can receive a free soccer ball, basketball or hockey stick and ball.

“Play it Forward is a fee subsidy program intended to assist families whose financial situation limits their child’s ability to participate in soccer, basketball and hockey” explains Nadine Devin, Project Manager with the County of Middlesex. “But with COVID-19, many sporting associations have unfortunately had to cancel their seasons”.

Recreation leaders from the local municipalities and County Administration agreed to utilize funding remaining in the 2019-2020 budget to acquire sporting equipment for distribution to families in need. Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, County of Middlesex Warden comments that “We are limited in subsidizing recreation fees at this time, but our hope is we can support children to continue to play their sport of hockey, soccer or basketball at home over the summer months”.

Eligible families will be directed to complete an online form where they can select their sporting equipment of choice. Equipment will then be disseminated through a distribution plan, specific to their municipality, that considers COVID-19 safety guidelines.

In 2019, Middlesex Dairy Producers donated \$15,000 to the County of Middlesex. The intention of the funds is to assist families who are facing financial hardship and whose financial situation limits their child’s ability to participate in community recreation programs. Under the direction of Middlesex Dairy Producers, local municipalities were able to subsidize registration costs for hockey, soccer and basketball.

County Council at the May 26, 2020 meeting, agreed to provide \$5,000 from the Middlesex Supports Program budget to support the Play it Forward initiative.

The following Municipalities have partnered with the County of Middlesex to offer this program:

- Township of Adelaide Metcalfe
- Township of Lucan Biddulph
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
- Municipality of Southwest Middlesex
- Municipality of Thames Centre
- Village of Newbury

Families interested in inquiring about sporting equipment for a child or children in their household can visit www.middlesex.ca/departments/social-services/play-it-forward.

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