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## Woolwich wants to be Hockeyville

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RECORD STAFF

### WOOLWICH TOWNSHIP

When Jacqueline Hanley moved back to Elmira in 2004 after years of living abroad, she wanted her son to play hockey, but couldn't afford the equipment.

She called the president of minor hockey to figure out what she should do. The next day, a full set of used equipment appeared on her doorstep.

Hanley, a single mother of three, was beside herself. But the community's generosity didn't stop there. From the bleachers of cheering hockey moms, Hanley witnessed her son, Joey, now 10, learning life lessons she couldn't teach. His coaches were like father figures, she said.

"When you have a community as strong as Elmira that backs you, the community can become a surrogate," she said.

Hanley was one of 56 residents who submitted stories to the CBC to show why Woolwich Township should be named the next Hockeyville in an annual television contest.

"I don't feel alone. Ever," she said yesterday. "I have my community. I have hockey."

The township may be in the running for the CBC contest's top 10. If they win, Woolwich could host an NHL pre-season game plus get \$100,000 toward arena upgrades.

The four runners-up each get \$25,000 for arena upgrades in the Kraft-sponsored contest.

Last year's winner was Roberval, Que., a town of 11,000. North Bay won in 2007, and Salmon River, N.S., took top prize in 2006.

CBC crews have been filming in Elmira and St. Jacobs this week, a good hint Woolwich made the top 10, said Graham Snyder, who organized a Hockeyville committee for Woolwich's bid.

The town is anxiously awaiting the Jan. 14 airing of the Kraft Hockeyville Top 10 show at 8 p.m. on CBC. After that, voting will open for the top five.

"You basically play hockey in Woolwich. That's pretty much it," said Jim Radcliffe, president of the minor hockey association and part of the committee that helped Joey play hockey. With the help of anonymous donors, "The Friends of Hockey" quietly helped put six kids on the ice this season, he said.

The township of 19,600 has 550 kids registered in minor hockey, said Deb Good, a self-professed "hockey mom."

With two teenage boys in hockey, she said the arena becomes the centre of her social life every winter, and the family doesn't make plans until they have their hockey schedule.

The township has bred such NHL players as Darryl Sittler, Dennis Wideman and Ric and Rod Seiling -- brothers of Waterloo regional chair Ken Seiling.

Dan Snyder, who played for the Atlanta Thrashers, was another hometown hero. He died in 2003 after a car crash.

The township has raised more than \$5 million for a new arena in Dan's memory, which is set to open in September. If the community wins the CBC contest, the NHL game would be played at the new arena.

But for Hanley and her son, hockey has become more than a game.

"He doesn't have a Dad. But he's got hockey, he's got community," she said. "It's about people. It's about a feeling."

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